



ROBBERT BOSSCHART

# ALL ALEXANDER'S WOMEN

THE FACTS

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All Alexander's Women: The Facts (2nd edition)

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The goddess Inanna depicted on an Old-Babylonian clay tablet of c. 2000 BC, holding up the *Rings of Kingship* that bestow on mortals the “monarchy by divine right”: she can make or break kings and queens on earth. This means that

Inanna has inherited all the powers of the Great  
Goddess of the primitive era.

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## **HISTORICAL DATES/FACTS IN ALEXANDER'S LIFE**

### **356 BC:**

Alexander is born to queen Olympias and king Philip II in Pella, capital of Makedon, on July 20<sup>th</sup>. That night the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, burns down in Efesos.

### **352-343:**

Alexander is educated at palace by private tutors like Leonidas, his mother's kinsman; the *Iliad* epic of Homer and the *Histories* of Herodotos are his textbooks. He meets Persian prince Artabazos, exiled in Pella with his family including his daughter Barsine who is a few years older than Alexander (they return to Persia in 342).

### **343-340:**

the famous Makedonian philosopher/biologist Aristotle teaches Alexander and other youngsters of the Court at a private school; here, Hefaistion becomes his foremost companion and lover for life.

### **338:**

August, 2: Philip's final victory over the rest of Greece is sealed at the battle of Chaironea. Alexander leads the left wing of the army, is the



first to break through the frontline of Athenians and Thebans, and so decides the outcome. / Autumn: Philip begins to plan the invasion of Ionia, the W-coast of Asia Minor occupied by the Persian empire.

### **337:**

Spring: the king of Karia in Asia Minor offers his daughter Ada to the heir of Makedon. The intended bridegroom is Arridaaios, Philip's eldest son. Alexander intervenes secretly, offering to marry Ada himself. Philip punishes him by exiling his advisors. / Autumn: at Philip's marriage to a new (seventh) wife, her powerful family proclaims Alexander cannot be legitimate heir any more; he quarrels with them and with Philip. Olympias goes in exile to Molossia, and Alexander to Illyria. It takes Philip nearly a year to mend fences and make him return to Makedon.

### **336:**

October: at the festivities for the state marriage of Alexander's sister Kleopatra to the king of Molossia, a disgruntled bodyguard murders Philip. Alexander is proclaimed king, but faces fierce uprisings at Makedon's borders and in southern Greece (Thebes, Athens).

### **335:**

September: the siege/sack of Thebes puts an end to Greek resistance. The League of Corinth recognises Alexander as *Hegemon* in Philip's place to lead the invasion against Ionia. Also in

Corinth, Alexander speaks with Diogenes. In Delphi, Alexander obtains a favourable remark from the prophetess.

**334:**

May: Alexander lands in Asia / Early June: Battle at the Granikos, Persians routed / July: Sardès and Miletos captured / Summer: two-month siege of Halikarnassos, occupied by Memnon. Ada of Karia adopts Alexander.

**333:**

Winter: Karia, Lykia, Pamfylia & Frygia conquered / Spring: Memnon dies suddenly / April-July: Alexander cuts the Gordian Knot; late July: Alexander leaves Gordion, Darius leaves Babylon/ 5 Nov.: Battle of Issos. Darius' family captured on the battlefield, and Barsine in Damascus / Dec.: Darius negotiates in vain with Alexander.

**332:**

February-July: siege of Tyre / Spring: Persian fleet dispersed / July: Hefaistion sent to name a king in Sidon and appoints Abdalonymos / Sept-Nov.: Siege of Gaza / Alexander marches on Egypt.

**331:**

January: Alexander proclaimed pharaoh at Heliopolis and Memfis / March: visit to Ammon's oracle at Síwah / April 7th : Alexander founds Alexandria on the Nile Delta shore / June-Sept: march and campaigns in Fenicia, Syria, Mesopotamia / Oct. 1st : Battle of Gaugamela

(Arbela) / Oct 22nd: Mazaios surrenders Babylon / 15 Dec.: Abulites surrenders Susa, Alexander reinstalls Sisygambis and her grandchildren at the Old Palace / 22 Dec.: Alexander leaves to attack Persepolis; the Uxians captured, but Medates pardoned at Sisygambis' plea.

### **330:**

Jan-May: Alexander at Persepolis, palaces sacked & burned; then he marches north / Darius flees Ekbatana but is murdered c. 17 July at Thara by Bessos, who styles himself "king" / Winter: Demetrios & Dimnos try to murder Alexander; Filotas & Parmenion executed.

### **329:**

Late May: Alexander crosses the Hindu Kush northward into Sogdia / c. 1 June: Bessos captured and turned over for punishment to prince Oxyatres, who has become a top officer on Alexander's General Staff / Autumn: punitive expedition against the Saka tribe near the Aral Sea.

### **328:**

Winter: Alexander at Baktra / Summer: Campaigns in Bactria and Sogdia. At a drunken party in Marakanda (Samarkand), Alexander clashes with, and kills, 'Black' Kleitos. Hefastion becomes sole *chiliarch* of the cavalry, and increases his political role.

### **327:**

Winter: Alexander in Marakanda / Spring: Sogdian Rock captured / Early summer: marriage

to Roxane / Late summer: conspiracy of the pages; Kallisthenes condemned – he dies in prison / Fall: Alexander recrosses the Hindu Kush southward, to conquer India.

### **326:**

Feb.: Hefaistion leads the army advance through Gandara to Indus / Alexander conquers Massaga, reinstalls Kleofis (her Sanskrit name is Kripa) as its queen / May: Alexander's famous warhorse Boukefalos dies of age / Battle of the Hydaspes river against king Poros, who is routed but reinstated as king / At the Hydaspes camp, Roxane loses a son in or after childbirth / July: at the Hyfasis (Beas) river, the army refuses to advance further into India / Nov.: river voyage down the Indus begins.

### **325:**

January: Mallia taken by storm, Alexander wounded / July: the army reaches the mouth of the Indus / 15 Sept.: Nearchos starts on his sea voyage, Alexander comes near death in the Gadrosia desert / December: punishment of corrupt satraps, Peukestas appointed to govern Persia / Alexander builds up naval programme against Arabia and Carthago.

### **324:**

Feb.: Alexander in Pasargadai, Cyrus' tomb restored / March: Susa Weddings / Aug.: mutiny at Opis / Decree on the Exiles proclaimed in Greece / Oct.: Alexander at Ekbatana; Hefaistion dies (poisoned?)

**323:**

April-May: Alexander in Babylon, grand funeral  
for Hefaistion / Arabian campaign readied / June  
11<sup>th</sup> : Alexander dies.

## CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PERSIAN KINGS

Darius I Hystaspes/Hakhâmanish, c. 700 BC a subject of the Median Empire, unified nomadic tribes in Parsa, around present-day Shiraz.

Darius I Hystaspes, his son, vassal king in Parsa, c. 630 occupied neighboring Elam.

Cyrus I, his son, r. 600-580, made Elamite Susa the seat of Persia's kings.

Cambyses I, his son, r. 580-559, married into the royal family of Media.

Cyrus II the Great, his son, r. 559-530, conquered Media, Asia Minor, Babylonia, and regions bordering on Sogdia and India.

Cambyses II, his son, reigned 529-522, and conquered Egypt.

Darius I the Great, grandson of Cyrus II's brother, r. 521-486, reorganized the empire and continued the westward expansion from Ionia; in 507 even Makedon had become a vassal state.

Xerxes I, his son, r. 486-465; he lost the dominions in Greece and Ionia.

Artaxerxes I, his son, reigned 465-424; in 460 he faced a serious rebellion of Egypt, that won back its independence in 405.

Xerxes II, his eldest son, reigned in 423 (only for 45 days).

Darius II Ochus, his second son, reigned in 423 (only for half a

year).

Darius II ('the Bastard'), a third son by a concubine, reigned 423-404.

Artaxerxes II, his son, reigned 404-359; completed the recovery of Ionia that had begun c 410.

Artaxerxes III, his son, reigned 358-338, reconquered Egypt and Levant.

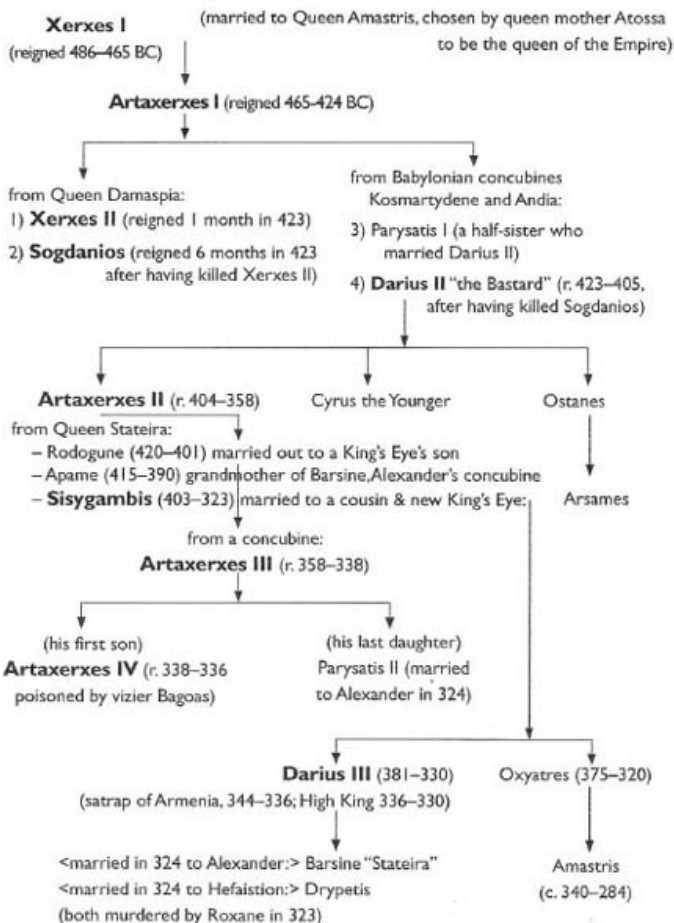
Artaxerxes IV, his son, reigned 338-336.

Darius III, another grandson of Artaxerxes II, reigned 336-330, and lost all.

Alexander the Great reigned as High King in Persia 330-323.

NOTE: Of the nine Persian High Kings that followed Darius the Great, six were murdered in palace intrigues: Xerxes I and Xerxes II, Sogdianos, Artaxerxes III, Artaxerxes IV, and Darius III (while fleeing from Alexander the Great, he was killed by his relative Bessos.)

## SISYGAMBIS' FAMILY TREE



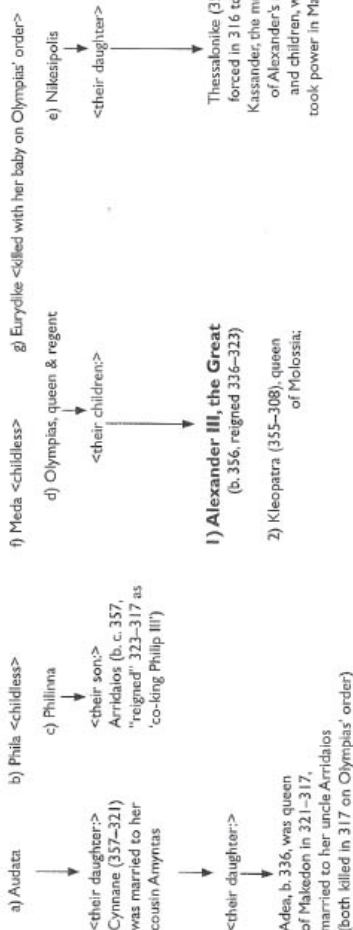


## ALEXANDER'S FAMILY TREE

### in Makedon:

In 500 BC, king Alexander I is the first Makedonian to obtain the right to take part in Greece's Olympic Games; the judges accept him as a descendant of the legendary king Perdikkas from Argos in Greece. Over a century later, his great-grandson is Amyntas III, who reigns in 393-370 with queen Euridyke I; their sons are:

- 1) **Alexander II** (r. 370–366; Euridyke I, regent)
- 2) **Perdikkas III** (r. 365–360; sent his brother Philip as hostage to Thebes)
- 3) **Philip II** (b. 382, r. 360–336) who successively married:



### in Molossia:

Neoptolemos (son of Achilles the hero) and his spouse-won Trojan wife Andromache are said to have spawned the royal dynasty. In 368 BC Molossia's historical king Neoptolemos left behind two orphans: Olympias (b. 373 and married in 357 to Philip II of Makedon) and a son called Alexander who in 336 married his niece Kleopatra, daughter of Olympias and Philip.

### 1) Alexander III, the Great

(b. 356, reigned 336–323)

2) Kleopatra (355–308), queen of Molossia.

## FOREWORD

This book swims against the current of a conventional wisdom that presents Alexander the Great simply as a conqueror. But he is much more than a one-sided warrior hero in a *men's world*! This story of **Alexander and his women** offers you the indispensable facts to complete the picture.

Besides his mother Olympias and his sister Kleopatra<sup>1</sup>, that epic centers on several Eastern women –mainly, relatives of the routed Persian king Darius– who play an essential role in his life and legacy. And who would have done yet more so, if Alexander had received more time to consolidate his multicultural empire. This would have spared us, I am convinced, our ugliest inheritance from Athens and Rome: the oppression of women. And thus, the ages-old stupidity to scorn the talents of half humankind.

Alexander would have advanced women's rights by 2,000 years, (re)introducing a solid Persian tradition into our Western culture. The texts of the Persepolis Fortification tablets prove that Persian women had their independent place in society, many of them being well-paid professionals in a great variety of callings.

Women of the Achaemenid (imperial) House appear in these texts as notably active persons: enterprising, and capable of taking their own decisions. They make long journeys throughout the realm to control the production of their lands and factories. They regulate and oversee the efforts of their salaried labourers. This totally debunks the idea that they are confined to a secluded life as the Greek and Roman writers say.

The tablets register the activities of some 15,000 persons at over 100 localities, and show that salaries were paid not according to gender distinctions, but to professional qualifications. Exceptionally well paid, for example, were the women managers called *Arasharas*, set over other (both male and female) workers.

But the fall of the Achaemenid empire destroyed the principal society model of the Ancient World, and the result was an irreparable deterioration of the position of women in public life. Had Alexander's successors not put an end to his policy of maintaining Persian traditions, no doubt women throughout ancient and modern social history would have been far better off.

This said, which 'women of Alexander' should we take a fresh look at? In rising order of importance, and grouped here according to the theme they may illustrate, they are:

### **“Alexander and sex or no sex”**

\*Kallixeina, Thessalian callgirl hired by Olympias

to seduce him c 342 BC

\*A married Makedonian girl he sends away from his bed in Pella c 336 BC

\*Kampaspe, a *hetaira* he presents as a 'gift' to Apelles, in Ionia c 334 BC

\*The sexy harp player offered to him by Antipatrides (in Lykia c 334 BC?)

\*Stateira, the gorgeous wife of Darius III, c 332 BC

### **“Alexander’s respect for women and women’s rights”**

\*Timokleia, sister of an enemy general; Alexander sets her free in 335 BC

The mythical Amazon Thalestris (an updated Penthesileia, or the Scythian bride offered –in vain– by king Karthasis in 330 BC)

\*Telesippa, a *hetaira* whose freedom Alexander upholds in early 324 BC

\*The 100 ‘Amazons’ sent to him by Atropates, near Ekbatana, in 324 BC

### **“Alexander’s public image in Makedon and Greece”**

\*The Karian bride princess Ada II (Alexander’s political intrigue, 337 BC)

\*The Delphi Pythia (Alexander uses her remark as if prophecy, in 335 BC)

\*Thais (representing ‘Athens’ in the *Persepolis propaganda*, 330 BC)

\*Cynnane, Thessalonike (half-sisters who play a

role only after 323 BC)

\*Adea (Cynnane's daughter), warlike queen of Makedon in 321-317 BC

### **“Alexander's plans for an integration policy in Persia”**

\*A wife of Hystaspes, token of a planned return of Darius' women, 330 BC

\*The Persian royal/noble ladies as political allegiance-builders, whom he chooses as brides for his top generals [besides Drypetis for Hefaistion, and Stateira and Parysatis for himself] in Susa, 324 BC. They include:

- Amastris for Krateros; Apame (daughter of Spitamenes) for Seleukos
- Artakama and Artonis (sisters of Barsine) for Ptolemy and Eumenes
- N.N. (maybe also called Barsine), daughter of Barsine, for Nearchos
- N.N. daughter of Atropates, satrap of Media, for Perdikkas

### **“Alexander as successor of the Achaemenid dynasty”**

\*Barsine (358-309 BC; mother of Herakles), his bedmate in 333-327 BC

\*Roxane (340-311 BC; mother of Alexander IV), *child-bride* in 327 BC

\*Barsine/Stateira as mother of the future High King (as from 324 BC)

\*Drypetis, with Hefaistion eventual Regents for

this heir (324 BC)

\*Parysatis II, the –unused– alternative for Barsine/Stateira (324 BC)

**“Alexander’s world vision, and women as political advisors”**

\*Olympias (373-316 BC), princess and later Regent of Molossia; queen in Makedon, where her social/political activities recall the example of Alexander’s grandmother Eurydike

\*Kleopatra (355-308 BC), Alexander’s full sister, queen in Molossia, and Alexander’s ‘shadow Regent’ in Makedon

\*Ada (380-323 BC), queen of Karia, who adopts Alexander as her son

\*Sisygambis (403-323 BC), queen-mother of Persia, just as influential under her firstborn Darius III as under her ‘son’ Alexander

Also to be placed, partly, in this category:

\*The Syriac soothsayer, as his protectress  
c. 327 BC

\*Queen Kleofis, as his advisor on India c.  
326 BC

Note, moreover, the precedents of historical **‘women of power’** in this region: the queens Amytis, Kassandane, Irdabama, Atossa,

Irtashduna and Amastris in Persia, all of them served by *Arasharas*. And in Assyria, Sammur-Amat; in Scythia, Tomyris of the Massagetai; in Karia, Artemisia I and II; and in Kilikia, Epyaxa.

Later *icons* are Cleopatra VII of Egypt, Amanirenas of Meroé, and Zenobia of Palmyra.

## ALEXANDER'S WOMEN

This tale could be told in strict chronological order, beginning with the first girl on record. She is 'Kallixeina' (a professional alias meaning *the beautiful stranger*): the sex bomb from Thessaly sent to Alexander's bed by his mother Olympias – probably to see if that could counter Hefaistion's growing influence. Quite a juicy story.

Even so, I think I had better follow Homeros' example, and make a 10-year 'fast-forward jump' to the end phase, where the *sense of the narrative* is unfolded. In those short years, Alexander has changed world history. He has developed, and now reveals, his full character. It shows clearly in an event that the biographer Plutarch relates in no less than three different places of his works; he must have sensed the power of this anecdote.

## TELESIPPA



Early 324 BC, Alexander is talking with one of his Makedonian men about a woman, Telesippa, who is going back to Greece. The lovesick soldier cannot live without her, and has submitted a false application for invalidity leave. Alexander understands, and trying to help the man, asks him “whom one should speak to, regarding Telesippa” (for he thinks she is a brothel slave and could be bought). No, says the soldier, she is a free woman. “Ah, but that changes the situation,” Alexander answers. “We will have to try to persuade her to stay, with good arguments and gifts – **for we do not have the right to compel a free woman.**”

The man saying this, is Alexander the ruler of nearly the whole known world; the one depicted in Athens as an Orientalised despot. But the truth is that Alexander recognises and maintains the rights of a free woman. This was not part of his education. The culture he came from had no regard for women’s rights. Not even his great teacher Aristoteles had come that far. What, then, does this personal stance of Alexander mean?

His close bond with Olympias in his youth no doubt opened the way to such convictions. But in this adult Alexander, who now often disregards his mother’s counsel –repeated over and over in her long letters–, the anecdote becomes more compelling. Persia has given him this level of insight; but who in Persia? And what did that mean for Alexander’s designs for his world

empire, that is to say, for our cultural heritage?

## THE KARIAN PRINCESS

But first we return to chronological order. After the failed sex bomb Kallixeina comes a failed bride: princess Ada II of Karia. In this affair we see an ambitious young Alexander, fearful that his status of crown prince is in danger, react by taking an enormous risk. He thwarts a diplomatic negotiation of his father, king Philip.

This princess Ada is just a pawn in a political power play at the highest level. On the one hand, the aggressive expansion of Makedon under Philip, who is already eying the rich Ionian provinces of Persia. On the other hand, the classic troubles of a succession on the Persian throne. After the death in 338 BC of Artaxerxes III *Ochus*, who had grabbed power through wholesale murder and deceit, the fight for the succession is once again as cruel as unpredictable.

With the faraway center of the empire in turmoil, vassal kings look around for local help. Ada's father, the satrap Pixodaro of Karia –which borders on Ionia– contacts Philip and offers him the hand of his daughter for “the crown prince of Makedon”. Philip names as the groom his eldest son, prince Arridaios, who is mentally handicapped (this, Pixodaro does not yet know). Behind their back, Alexander offers himself to

marry Ada and so, he thinks, ensure his status as crown prince.

Philip discovers the intrigue, gets furious, and punishes Alexander by exiling his closest friends and advisors. The marriage is scuttled. In the end, Ada II will become the wife of a Persian satrap, Orontobates.

Around the same time of the 'Karian princess' affair, a different, little incident happens in Pella, involving a young Makedonian woman. Plutarch tells it as an example of Alexander's respect for a woman's rights.

The palace servants have arranged for a girl to go to Alexander's bed. She arrives very late, and confesses that she had to wait until her husband fell asleep. Alexander, who did not know she was married, sends her home on the spot. Then he gives the servants a piece of his mind because they had nearly made him guilty of such an abuse.

There is a similar anecdote which shows that Alexander, also after he has become an undisputed ruler, still disapproves of coming between man and wife. It happens sometime at the beginning of the campaign against Persia.

An old friend, Antipatrides, offers him a luxurious dinner and has a sexy young woman come in to entertain them with harp music. Visibly it is the intention of Antipatrides to 'score' with Alexander, by having her seduce him. Alexander feels like it at first, but then notices

something is going on between the harper and the host. "She is your woman?" he asks, and Antipatrides admits that is true.

Alexander sends her off, and gives Antipatrides a sound drubbing.

## KAMPASPE AND STATEIRA

Episodes of failed or discarded seductions notwithstanding, there is no doubt that Alexander liked to dally with sexy girls. We have a good example in the Thessalian *hetaira* Kampaspe. (The Roman writer Aelian confuses her with Kallixeina; the better version is that of Pliny the Elder, who calls her "Alexander's favorite concubine".)

She pleases Alexander so much that he asks his court painter, Apelles, to make him a nude portrait of her. As Kampaspe poses for Apelles, the two fall in love. The magnanimous reaction of Alexander, Pliny tells us, is that he keeps the portrait but sends Kampaspe, with his best wishes, to Apelles' house. Thus, she becomes the model for his most famous painting: *Afrodite arising from the Sea*. Everybody said she was stunningly beautiful, and Plinius quotes the story as an example of Alexander's self-control.

It was of course a well known (propaganda) theme that Alexander could keep down his sex drive. The most often repeated story in this vein concerns the gorgeous wife of Darius III, Stateira.

Some authors doubt whether it is true that Alexander refused to enjoy this captured queen – the most beautiful woman in Asia, all sources agree– for sexual booty, “his spear-won right” as Homeros would have put it.

But I am convinced that Alexander, in such cases, gave priority to his political plans above his pleasures; and that he had the firm design to return this Stateira, unscathed, to Darius in a grand gesture. Like he did, around that same time, with a granddaughter of *Ochus*: a princess who was sent back to her Achaemenid husband Hystaspes after she had been captured by Alexander.

The Persians perfectly understood the purpose of such a ‘message’. For it was said that in this way, Cyrus the Great had once returned a beautiful captive, the Lady of Susa. She then had persuaded her husband to become a loyal follower of Cyrus. Whether history or legend, it featured in the writings of the Athenian general Xenofon, which Alexander knew by heart.

A few commentators, who disparage of Alexander’s magnanimity, prefer to propose such anecdotes as proof that he did not like sex with women. But there is no ground to disbelieve the statements in classical sources that he thoroughly enjoyed the sex appeal of Kampaspe, Barsine and Roxane.

The fact is that, all his adult years, he kept at his side two male lovers and four female

bedmates in succession. So Alexander would have had a good laugh at the modern hype to depict him either as totally gay (because of his relation with Hefaistion and the Persian eunuch Bagoas), or as ‘undersexed’. And he would have been bewildered at the Western obsession for heated disputes about his sexuality. After all, he was just a normal bisexual, like everybody else in his world who had the means for the upkeep of such pleasures.

### TIMOKLEIA

Besides Telesippa, another ‘anecdotal’ but significant woman in his life is Timokleia from Thebes. She is the first example that shows us Alexander as a powerful ruler who enforces respect for women’s rights. It was well known in his army. Sitting around the campfires, his soldiers would tell each other the tale of their king pardoning ‘that woman in Thebes’. It had happened during the rebellion in Greece of 335 BC; Plutarch and other historians still have all the details.

Alexander’s veterans would remember it like this: “I was there myself, so I tell it to you as if I see it happen before my eyes again. Now, Thebes has fallen –bloody siege, that–, and Alexander’s latest allies are sacking the city. They have many scores to settle with the Thebans. In the middle of that chaos, a group of our own soldiers come

before him, hauling along a woman. They accuse her of having killed their officer. He was the commander of that brigade from Thrakia, you know, Hipparchos.

At Alexander's questions, the woman answers that yes, she did: the officer had broken into her house, raped her, and mistreated her to make her confess where the 'treasure' of the house was hidden. She had led him to the well in the garden. When he was leaning over the side to look down, she had heaved him in and killed him off with stones. Finally she adds: "My name is Timokleia. I am the sister of Theagenes, commander of the Theban army who fought for the liberty of Greece against Philip, and fell on the battlefield of Chaironea."

That's putting up a big mouth, no? Sure she thinks she will be executed anyway over the killing of an officer. But no sir, our Alexander has a different point of view. He tells the soldiers that Hipparchos had acted against his orders, and that the woman had been right in defending herself. He sets her free, and permits her to leave together with her children."

The anecdote stresses Alexander's unusual chivalrous way of treating women; but there is more to it than that. The sack of Thebes has often been (and today still is) cited as a reason for harsh criticism on Alexander. The city paid heavily for its rebellion: all the survivors were sold as slaves, and all buildings –except for the

house of the poet Pindaros– razed to the ground.

Alexander meant to terrify other Greek rebels into surrender so as to avoid further war losses, and it worked. Athens, the true instigator of this uprising, capitulated and suffered no loss at all. In other words, the punishment of Thebes was not the blind orgy of (Alexander's) violence decried by his critics, but a cold-blooded calculation.

He could not prevent his last-minute allies, until recently tyrannised by Thebes, from taking their vengeance on the city. But this incident proves that his own soldiers had clear orders to behave civilly. How else would they have decided, in the middle of the chaos of a city being sacked, and with a woman on their hands who freely admitted to having killed their officer, not simply to finish her off? Nobody would have taken notice. But no, they brought her to Alexander. They must have expected his decision already.

## THE AMAZONS

Alexander's positive attitude towards women is also based on his fascination with the mythical Amazons; not so difficult to understand in a man who goes to sleep with Homeros' *Iliad* under his pillow. Ever since he was a child he has been listening raptly to all the Amazon legends; especially when he asked his tutors about the



deeds of Herakles and Achilles, whom he regards as his direct ancestors. He dreams of equalling their feats, including their encounters with such admirable Amazon queens as Hippolyta and Penthesileia. And that dream will never die.

Mary Renault, who wrote an insightful biography of Alexander besides her famous novelised trilogy about him, told it as follows:

“Persia spent upward of a millennium embroidering the story of Sikandar *Dhu'l-Qarnain*, the Two-Horned, the World Seeker. In the pleasure houses, the bazaars, the inns, the harems, centuries before it got into written form, they collected fabulous exploits from eras before his birth. Of no one else did they now appear so credible.

Dispatching Poros of India single-handed, he takes the surrender of the King of China, who bestows on him the Auspicious Horseman, a gallant warrior later revealed as a lady of dazzling beauty, with whom he spends an elaborately decorated night of love. So long remembered was his wish to meet an Amazon!”

Renault is referring here to the Persian saga *Sikandar-Nama*, that appeared in the year 1203 AD. But the basic elements for this extravagantly

embroidered romance with an Amazon had appeared over a thousand years before, in the first Alexander biographies. There the story was not so elaborated, but equally fantastic. The earliest version we have was published around 40 BC by Diodoros in book XVII of his *Library of History*, referring to the year 330 BC:

<In North Persia> “the Amazon queen Thalestris arrived at his camp with an honor guard of 300 woman warriors. She explained she had come with the intention of conceiving his child. Alexander granted his army a rest of thirteen days, during which he spent his furlough assisting Thalestris in this quest.

At the end of this period, Thalestris considered she was indeed pregnant. She left the camp and Alexander moved on with his army into Parthia.”

The tale is too good to be true. Plutarch (*Alexander*, 46, 1–6) gives us a long list of classical historians who either believed or denied its plausibility. The nay-sayers, he notes, “seem to have the support of Alexander himself, because he wrote a very precise and detailed letter [about his activities in that period] to Antipater [his regent in Makedon], in which he says that the Scythian king offered him his daughter in

marriage; but he does not mention any Amazon. Anyway, our admiration for Alexander will not be decreased if we disbelieve the story of the Amazon, nor increased if we believe it.”

Nowadays it is accepted as fact that the Scythian leader Karthasis offered Alexander one of his daughters for a bride. She may well have been, like many warlike Scythian women, such an attractive whirlwind on horseback as described in the *Sikandar-Nama*. Alexander’s official chronicler Kallisthenes, who was then still praising his king into the skies, would not have hesitated a second to upgrade her to the dreamed Amazon.

But since Alexander did not take up the Scythian marriage offer, we may confidently doubt that he ever got to enjoy those thirteen days of lovemaking with an ‘Amazon’.

Anyway, his yearning to meet Amazons becomes well known among his Persian vassals. The Persians probably see this as one more example of Alexander trying to surpass the deeds of Cyrus the Great, who finally was defeated by a warrior woman.

In 529 BC, Cyrus’ last –and fatal– exploit had been a march beyond his northern frontier into the lands of the Scythian tribe of the Massagetai. He felt sufficient respect for their proud queen Tomyris to begin with an offer to marry her. But as she refused to submit to him in any way (while giving sound arguments why she turned him

down), Cyrus attacked – and died on the battlefield.

This historical fact, highlighting an unconquerable queen, must have appeared to the Persians as a perfectly understandable reason why Alexander would want to conquer Amazon warriors. And so one of his satraps tries to fulfil his desire (though with only a sketchy idea of what it is all about). In 324 BC, shortly after the Susa weddings, as Alexander is making a festive journey to the old Median capital of Ekbatana, he receives a surprise gift. His Persian satrap there, Atropates, feels honoured by the king who has just made him father-in-law to general Perdikkas. Atropates conceives a shining idea to reciprocate, by regaling Alexander with not just one, but a whole troop of legendary women. The historian Arrian writes (*Anabasis*, VII, 13):

“He gave him a hundred women, saying that they belonged to the Amazons. They were equipped like cavalry troopers, except that they carried axes instead of spears, and little bucklers instead of shields. Some say their right breast was smaller, and was uncovered in battle. But Alexander sent them away from the army, lest they suffer any outrage from the Makedonian soldiers or the barbarian troops.

According to the story, he told them to

inform their queen that he would come to see her, to get children by her. This, however, neither Aristoboulos nor Ptolemy nor any other reliable author on such matters has attested.

<...> If Atropates did show Alexander any women riders on horse, I think they were some other barbarian women taught to ride, whom he exhibited, dressed in the traditional Amazon fashion. <...> I do not think it credible that this race of Amazon women ever existed at all, despite so many eminent writers singing their praises.”

The myth stubbornly refuses to die, however. It resurfaces in another Persian folk story, retold for ages by word of mouth until it was first written down in the 12<sup>th</sup> century (the *Darab-Nama*; we'll come back to it later). In our days, it has found a new and daring sequel in Western literature: see Judith Tharr 2004, *Queen of the Amazons*.

But in all its various versions over two millennia, it always signals the same basic message: that Alexander is ready to accept a woman warrior/queen as his equal.

## THE PROPHETESS OF APOLLO

Even so, on occasion Alexander shows he has no qualms about using women as pawns in his political strategies. And he can go to the extreme of manipulating a sacrosanct personage: the pythoness of the god Apollo in Delphi. A suicidal foolhardiness, if it were not for the excuse of a ‘family precedent’.

The whole episode seems calculated to remind the Greeks that Alexander is a direct offspring of the half-god Herakles, according to the genealogy of Makedon’s royal house. (Herakles also committed a great insolence at the Delphi oracle, and Zeus ordered Apollo to pardon him.)

The incident comes in the aftermath of Alexander’s appointment as *Hegemon* –supreme commander of all the Hellenes– for the war against Persia. The Greeks, at the assembly in Corinth, have only accepted him grudgingly. Alexander needs to persuade them, preferably with some sign from the heavens, that it is in their interest to obey him. Thus, on the way back to Makedon he makes a halt at Delphi, so that the oracle of Apollo may judge on Alexander’s leadership for the expedition. But his visit happens to coincide, Plutarch reports, with a run of inauspicious days, when the delivery of oracles is traditionally forbidden.

Alexander doesn’t take No for an answer. He has the venerated pythoness called out. She repeats that she cannot officiate the rite of seating herself at the sacred site where the god

inspires her in her trance. Alexander insists, tugs at her sleeve, and starts to drag her towards the temple. The *Pythia*, apparently overcome by his forcefulness, gives up and exclaims: “My son, you are invincible!”

Immediately Alexander lets her go –after all, it is a bad idea to pick a quarrel with Apollo– and proclaims this is the only prophecy he needs. Then, silencing the fact that there has not been an oracle at all, he spreads the word among the Greeks that the god Apollo himself recommends them to follow this unbeatable leader.

It should be noted that Plutarch has been for many years a priest at Delphi. He translated for visitors the utterances of Apollo’s pythoess as she voiced the visions of her trance. That explains why he is the first author to give background details of this ‘prophecy’ about Alexander.

The earlier writers had only registered its existence. Like Diodoros, who states that in Siwah (Egypt), when Alexander asked the oracle of Zeus-Ammon if he would rule the whole earth, the answer said that he would be invincible forever. Later, in India, Alexander remembered – so Diodoros writes– that “the *Pythia* had called him unconquerable, and Ammon had given him the rule of the whole world.”

In his explanation, Plutarch has the pythoess of Delphi address Alexander with the same salutation (My son) and the same description

(unbeatable) that, four years later, the oracle of Zeus-Ammon will famously use to proclaim him the invincible son of the supreme god. So in reality, Plutarch claims for his own prophetic the honour of having anticipated the oracle of Siwah, a longtime rival of Delphi, by several years. But in doing so, he reveals that Alexander in fact manipulated the sacrosanct *Pythia* to his own means.

### THAIS, FROM ATHENS

With the same swagger, Alexander can take advantage of his woman friends if that suits his aims. We see a good example some months after he has routed Darius (definitively, though he does not yet know it) at Gaugamela. He then makes a triumphant entry into Babylon, conquers the ceremonial capital of Parsa/Persepolis – and puts it to the torch.

This burning incident has been much criticised by latterday commentators. But it is evident that the *Hegemon* Alexander, whose control over Greece derives from a mandate of the League of Corinth to lead the Greeks in a war against Persia, has to give his ‘partners’ tangible proof that he is doing his job.

The first and foremost motivation of all warring Greeks is booty. Alexander has balked at giving his soldiers their ‘good right’ to sack Babylon or Susa, but he cannot escape from



tradition forever – so Persepolis pays the score. However, Alexander being Alexander, one strict order is enforced: the women citizens of Persepolis are not to be touched (as the Roman biographer Curtius states in his book V.6.8).

By this time, Alexander is planning far ahead. He first has the enormous gold and silver reserves of the royal treasury carried off to safety. Though not to Greece, which in his design has already been set on the sidelines; but to Ekbatana (where he will later install Hefaistion as his prime minister). Then, to hide his real plans to the eyes of the Greeks behind a smokescreen, he theatrically burns down the empty palaces and fortifications of Persepolis. Pure propaganda. But the spectacle has to convince the Greeks that now they can celebrate their triumph over the Persian arch-enemy, who had ravaged and scorched their cities.

And so Alexander coins the legend of Thais: a Greek *hetaira* has had the inspiration, at a feast with Alexander and his generals, to put a torch to the palace of the hated Xerxes! And what is more, Alexander has immediately approved her initiative, and assisted her personally in throwing more firebrands into the buildings! With the enthusiastic help of her lover, general Ptolemy, the future pharaoh of Egypt!

Why Thais? Because she is from Athens. So “Athens has destroyed Persepolis!” Alexander has always shown a healthy respect for Athens’

brilliant fame...

## CYNNANE AND THESSALONIKE, HALF-SISTERS

Just as finely tuned to Greek *Realpolitik* is Alexander's treatment of his two half-sisters, Cynnane and Thessalonike. The elder Kunnanè (as her name sounds in her Illyrian –today we would say, Albanian– dialect) is a strong-minded woman. The first child of king Philip, and his blood runs thick. Educated in the war-hardened traditions of her mother Audata, she already accompanies him on his military campaigns when she is only in her teens. The historian Polyainos mentions Cynnane as killing with her own hands the Illyrian queen Kaeria on the battlefield.

Around 338 BC, Philip marries her to his nephew Amyntas. This way, the couple has sufficient legitimacy to function as reserve-candidates to the throne, in case Alexander –who is already leading war parties for his father– would die an untimely death.

When Philip is assassinated a year later, and Alexander needs to shore up a wobbly throne, he immediately has Amyntas eliminated. Cynnane, who has just borne Amyntas' child, a baby girl, will feel little sympathy for her royal half-brother. To get her out of his hair, Alexander decides to marry her off to a faraway ally, Langaros. But before the trusted Langaros can

come over from his dominions (in present-day Bulgaria) for the marriage ceremony, he dies.

Cynnane refuses to be saddled up with another husband. So she withdraws to a corner of Makedon, where she will give her daughter Adea the same warrior education she herself had received. Alexander will never again have to worry about her – but his successors all the more.<sup>2</sup>

Thessalonike, Alexander's much younger half-sister, plays no visible role during his lifetime. She is educated in the household of Olympias, as her mother had died three weeks after giving birth to her. She is not allotted a husband. Alexander does not want to see a rival to his own crown prince grow up at the hearth of the Makedonian royal family.

Only after both Alexander and Olympias have been eliminated (Antipater's son, Kassander, is widely suspected of having engineered the first, and publicly seen to have caused the second of these deaths/murders), Thessalonike finally gets married: Kassander forces her to become his wife. And, true to style, it is a son of Kassander who will later kill Thessalonike, his mother, in a fight for the throne.

But now we have wandered into a faraway future; so let's get back to Alexander, who is busy conquering Persia.

The first Persian woman to play an important role in his life is the princess Barsine. Not a 'pureblood' Persian, for her mother is a Greek from Rhodes; but the rest of her pedigree offers more than enough compensation. She is a direct offspring of the High King Artaxerxes II, through his daughter Apame and her son prince Artabazos, hereditary satrap of a Persian province near the Hellespont.

(By the way, "Barsine" is a thoroughly Achaemenid name for a princess. Originally a pet name meaning "my dearie little Highness", it has been carried by Persian royals since the earliest days of the empire.)

Alexander knows this Barsine since his youth. Her father had taken refuge in Makedon with his whole family, after a failed rebellion against the central government of Susa. King Philip gave him protection in Pella for many years. But finally Artabazos' brother-in-law, a high ranking mercenary general in Persia's pay, obtained the royal pardon that allowed the family to return to Ionia. As a thanksgiving present, Artabazos offered this general, Mentor, his daughter Barsine for wife.

However, before that marriage in 342 BC the teenager princess Barsine no doubt became acquainted with Alexander, then in his early teens. Their difference in age was not all that much, probably about two years. Though girls in their adolescence usually outpace boys in social

graces, Alexander was an exception. (At that early age, he even succeeded in awing Persian envoys on a visit to Makedon.) So he can easily have befriended a daughter of his father's longtime guest. In the small, provincial town of Pella, such extraordinary foreign residents as an imperial Persian prince and his elegant daughter must have fascinated Alexander outright.

The fact of her being a youth acquaintance offers the most logical explanation why Barsine is sent to Alexander in 333 BC. She had been captured by the army in Damascus. Most noncombatant members of the Persian court had been left there by Darius on his way to Issos, lest they slow down the march. But he did take his own family along to the battlefield: the thought that he could lose against that little Makedonian army never crossed his mind.

When Alexander's general Parmenion makes up the tally of the riches and useful prisoners taken in Damascus –he even counts the number of cooks–, he finds that he also has this princess Barsine in his power. She now is a widowed and remarried woman, mother of a girl and a boy; one from each marriage.

Probably, Barsine and her children have travelled with the Persian court as hostages for the good behaviour of her second husband, the mercenary general Memnon. Anyway, Parmenion correctly thinks that Barsine can be useful for Alexander in the conquest of Persia proper. She is

transferred to general headquarters – and as it turns out, straight to Alexander's bed.

Some sources only want to see her as his housekeeper: a princess of sufficient status, with the added value that she already speaks Greek and knows how a Makedonian household is run; so she can be allowed to look after the daily needs of the king. But Barsine is more than that; and more than a simple bedmate, too. "Her relationship with Alexander was certainly sexual, but also something more substantial –perhaps more formal and more political– than is usually understood," professor Elizabeth Carney affirms (see: Carney 2000).

Alexander must have loved her for real. He kept her constantly at his side, all discomfort of his endless marches notwithstanding, for at least six years. A few sources even indicate: until his dying day, though not as a concubine any more in the final years. The reason why their relation as lovers came to an end is not explained by the historians, but I will set out my theory presently.

First, another consideration that is more to the point. If Parmenion thinks that Barsine can be useful for the conquest of Persia, this idea has nothing to do with her value in ransom money or as a bargaining chip in political negotiations. For that, Alexander himself has already taken much more valuable hostages on the battlefield of Issos: the wife, the children and the mother of Darius. But he immediately proclaims that he refuses

even to think of using them in such a way, and that also applies to Barsine.

Darius, however, does think along those lines initially. He sends a haughty letter to Alexander with a proposal to buy back his family. His offer is that Alexander may keep the Ionian dominions he has conquered so far, in exchange for a non-aggression pact with Persia and the return of the royal prisoners. For added measure, Darius also proposes that Alexander may keep one of his (as yet, too young) daughters to marry her. Evidently with the purpose that Persia may one day inherit back, through her children, the lost territories.

No way, Alexander answers, period.

Then why is Barsine still valuable? As a source of information – or rather, as the access point to inside knowledge about the workings of the Persian empire. Her father, prince Artabazos, has again attained high rank at Court. But for now, this cannot be exploited. The prince stays at Darius' side as a loyal follower, in all senses of the word.

(He still remains with him when, three years later in distant Thara, Darius is killed by Bessos, who proclaims himself High King. Only then will Artabazos, out of enmity to the murderous Bessos, switch sides. Alexander will immediately reward Barsine's father by appointing him viceroy over wayward Baktria, present-day Afghanistan. But all that lies in an unforeseeable future.)

In the meanwhile, Alexander takes a surprising long time to prepare his assault on Persia proper. No doubt he could have done different. After Issos, with Darius' army in disarray, he could have stormed down the Royal Road virtually unopposed to take Babylon, Susa and Persepolis.

But no: first he busies himself during nearly two years with occupying the whole eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, from the Hellespont to Lybia. True, this is a legitimate strategic priority, to deny the Persian fleet the option of attacking Makedon behind his back (as Barsine's husband Memnon indeed tries to do, to no avail). Even so, is it really this visible military/logistic exercise, what takes Alexander such a long time? Or is it the invisible but vital effort to gather the inside information needed to overcome Persia's still vast might?

In both his decisive clashes with Darius, on the battlefields of Issos and Gaugamela, Alexander directs his attack straight at the enemy's head: the High King and the small cluster of top-ranking officials around him. These are the real rulers of the world empire that Cyrus has built up, and that is much too large to be effectively occupied by Makedon's small army. It is this *head* that Alexander has to overpower, with a swift precision action. To succeed in this, he first has to learn all that can be found out about them. And Barsine knows exactly who can



give him the information he so desperately needs.

But despite her merits, in the end Alexander shoves Barsine aside after the birth of their first and only son, Herakles, in 327 BC. This points to a complex situation.

To begin with, it is telling that Herakles does not get born until the sixth year of their relationship. After all, we know Barsine as a fertile woman who became pregnant immediately after her two previous wedding nights. It begs the conclusion that Alexander has told her in very clear terms that she can never become the mother of his heir. And that, therefore, she has used efficient contraceptives for years – until she has suddenly decided to conceive his child even so.

The classical sources indicate that Alexander, who naturally must have felt pride in his first son, did recognise him in his intimate circle as his offspring; but that he refused to acknowledge either Herakles as his legitimate heir or Barsine as his wife. My view is that he was extremely unhappy with Barsine for presenting him with the accomplished fact of a child in order to bind him at her side.

Whatever the truth, now two things happen. Barsine no longer accompanies the Makedonian army on its campaign through Bactria and Sogdia – and Alexander surprises all and sundry by his sudden decision to have an official marriage ceremony...with another girl.

## ROXANE

In part, Roxane will always remain a mystery from the moment on when Alexander took her for a wife. Why did he? Some present-day experts on Alexander prefer to look for political motives. They disregard the fact that classical historians like Arrian and Plutarch give a simple answer: he fell in love.

Curtius adds a revealing tidbit, typical of Alexander: he explained his decision by saying that “Achilles too had loved a captive girl”. (Referring to Briseis, for whose sake Achilles clashed with Agamemnon in a crucial episode of the Trojan war.) And “lest the vanquished feel it as an abuse, Alexander wished to unite himself to Roxane in legal wedlock”.

Arrian even says he has eyewitness accounts of this love story (from Ptolemy of course, and possibly Aristoboulos and Chares too). He also adds a telling personal reflection on Alexander’s relation with women:

“Those who served with Alexander said that Roxane was the loveliest woman they had seen in Asia, after Darius’ wife; and that when Alexander saw her, he fell in love with her. Despite this passion he did not want to violate her as a war captive, but did not think it beneath him to take her in marriage. This was an action of Alexander that I approve and

do not censure.

As for Darius' wife, who was said to be the most beautiful woman in Asia, either he felt no desire for her or he controlled himself, young as he was and at the very height of good fortune, when men act violently. He respected and spared her, showing much restraint as well as an ambition for good repute which was not misplaced."

Plutarch says much the same, though he characteristically adds both a political and a moralising afterthought:

"His marriage to Roxane was a love match, which began when he first saw her at the height of her youthful beauty taking part in a dance at a banquet. But it also played a part in furthering his policy of reconciliation: the barbarians were encouraged by the feeling of partnership which their alliance created. And they were completely won over by Alexander's moderation and courtesy, and by the fact that without the sanction of marriage he would not approach the only woman who had ever conquered his heart."

The moralising end sentence of Plutarch wrongly forgets about the concubine Barsine and

the *hetaira* Kampaspe (plus, possibly, the princess Barsine/Stateira); and his political side remark opens the door to other misinterpretations.

Professor Bosworth, in his *Conquest*, arguments with the example of Philip: “Alexander underscored his claims to lordship by taking a wife from the conquered territories, following in part the example of his father, though this was not a Makedonian, but a Baktrian princess. Her favourable treatment won over her father to collaborate with the conqueror. However politic it may have been, it aroused resentment among Makedonians opposed to orientalism...”.

Professor Heckel, in his *Who's Who*, says: “The chief motive will have been political: the marriage helped to end opposition to him in the northeast.”

These interpretations do not square with the facts. Roxane is no princess, but the simple daughter of a small-time Baktrian noble with no political clout that could provide a motive for Alexander. Only a full two years later –and surely at Roxane’s behest, not because of his own merits– her father is appointed satrap of an outlying region near India.

More to the point, Alexander has already subdued Bactria and Sogdia (and even severely curtailed the unruly Saka tribes across the frontier), by the time he marries Roxane in the summer of 327 BC. He does not need her, nor her

father, as a political instrument.

His motive may have been quite the opposite. The salient fact about Roxane is that she has no significant ties, and rather qualifies as a 'blank page' when he meets her: a teenager refugee among a group of local maidens performing a welcome dance, at a friendship celebration where Alexander regales the host –nót Roxane's father– with 30,000 cattle he has just plundered from the Saka.

After the recent breakdown of his relation with Barsine, Roxane's pubescent appeal probably lays in her stark difference with the adult princess Alexander has had at his side until then. Barsine, a royal with a heavyweight political background, may have led Alexander to the disappointed conclusion that his bedmate was pursuing her own agenda, which could become a political risk. And that is something he would certainly not expect of this *child-bride* Roxane.

But Roxane becomes a disappointment too. It takes her a year and a half to produce a first child (a stillborn boy). By 324 BC, when Alexander begins his great political reorganization of the empire, she has still not given him a possible heir. Neither has she impressed his court with queenly behaviour. So in the end he decides to marry a real Persian princess: Barsine/Stateira, the granddaughter of Sisygambis.

It was the threat of this rival –pregnant with the undisputed heir to Alexander’s empire, at the time of his fatal illness in 323 BC– that goaded Roxane to take her worst option. If she had linked up with Krateros, or Ptolemy, it could have been different; she too was finally pregnant with a secondary heir. But the first and only thing she thought of, was getting her revenge on Stateira. So she needed Perdikkas, who controlled Babylon — for the moment.

She forged an order sent by Royal Messenger to Susa, probably using Alexander’s seal, telling Stateira and Drypetis to come to the sickbed. As soon as they arrived, she had them killed. Perdikkas covered up for Roxane because he needed her yet unborn child as a counterweight against Alexander’s half-brother Arridaios, whom the mutinous Makedonian troops were proclaiming as the new King.

Professor Carney explains: “...the murder of Alexander’s new Achaemenid wife by Roxane and Perdikkas would confirm that Roxane, despite the fact that she was about to bear Alexander’s child, felt threatened by Stateira, and inclined to believe that any heir borne by this new bride would have precedence over any child of her own. While marrying a daughter of Darius in the 330s would have been a statement of Alexander’s conquest, by 324 it was a symbol for [imperial] continuity rather than for the already completed conquest. No wonder that Roxane was worried

about these women and any children they might produce — **Alexander had made them the future.**”

Also, Carney thinks that the other Persian princess murdered at Stateira’s side on Roxane’s orders was not Drypetis, but Parysatis. This last daughter of Artaxerxes III had been added to Alexander’s wives in 324 at Susa. Clearly, a political marriage following the example set by Darius the Great. That is, not only as an alternative in case the future might demand the production of another imperial heir; but also as a precaution to avoid that Parysatis, who carried dynastic legitimacy, could marry some rival pretender to the throne.

Carney argues that from a political point of view, Roxane had no reason to murder Drypetis who, as Hefaistion’s widow, no longer retained the power her husband had wielded. Nor could she produce a son with sufficient credentials to surpass Roxane’s offspring. But Parysatis, to the contrary, did have the theoretical capacity to present a baby son and proclaim him the imperial heir to Alexander. This made her a logical objective for a preventive assassination by Roxane.

On the other hand, if we want to take Plutarch literally when he writes that “Stateira and her sister” were killed, there is an additional option. Granted that Perdikkas agreed to Stateira’s murder, he probably preferred to do

away with Drypetis too, lest she marry some rival pretender.

Once Alexander's intended heir, the child by Stateira, has been eliminated, Perdikkas gets the agreement of the other generals to act as Regent for Arridaios and for Roxane's child if it turns out to be a boy (as it does). The only one who openly voices opposition against Roxane's child –or the son of Barsine, Herakles– as a High King under Perdikkas' control, is Ptolemy, and he loses the vote.

At the same time, nobody takes Arridaios seriously, so Perdikkas thinks he has all the years until Roxane's boy comes of age, to entrench himself in power. But within three years he is dead, killed by his own staff officers during a campaign against Ptolemy in Egypt, for having ordered his soldiers to swim across the Nile full of crocodiles.

From that moment on, Roxane and her boy Alexander IV are mere pawns in the power game of successive would-be leaders. Letting her ambition overcome common sense, she goes to Makedon. As professor Carney notes: "Roxane was consistently ignored by the Makedonian elite; see for example Polyperchon's offer to Olympias –not to Roxane– of *epimeleia* and *prostasia* (Diodoros 18.49.4)". [It is Olympias, not Roxane, who becomes the regent for her grandson.] Roxane and her son end up in the



hands of Kassander, the worst of all Alexander-haters. He has them secretly killed after a year in prison: as soon as they do not serve his purposes any more. The boy-king had just turned 13, then.

Alexander's other son, Herakles born from Barsine, does not fare much better. During the regency of general Polyperchon he is brought to mainland Greece with his mother. Evidently Polyperchon first thinks he may be used as a counterweight against the heirs controlled by Kassander and Adea, but soon comes to the conclusion the ploy will not work. So he uses them to his personal advantage as bargaining chips in his negotiation with Kassander, and finally has them killed. Plutarch states: "Polyperchon agreed with Kassander for 100 talents to do away with Herakles, Alexander's son by Barsine".

But again we have strayed far into future fights of would-be heirs for Alexander's throne, a succession for which he himself had established totally different plans. So we return to the moment in 324 BC when Alexander designs the future for the greatest multi-cultural empire the world has yet known.

Now he deliberately acts as the one who came not to destroy, but to continue the Achaemenid dynasty. His successor, born from a Persian princess, is to be the heir not only of Alexander the Great, but also of Cyrus the Great. And their

world empire will be governed by the children of a joint Persian-Greek elite: a new ruling class that Alexander himself creates at the mass wedding of Susa.

## **THE SUSA BRIDES**

The Greek and Roman authors, with their ingrained bias against women which they can only see as property of men, brush off the Susa brides as an extravaganza. With the commodity of hindsight, they consider them useless, too: after Alexander's death, nearly all these brides were set aside by their recent husbands. So the whole mass wedding affair is judged to have been just one big waste.

In addition to the cost of the eighty simultaneous marriages celebrated there, Arrian stresses, "Alexander ordered a list to be made up of all other Makedonians who had married Asiatic women. They were over 10,000 in number, and to these he also made presents on account of their weddings." Plutarch who, following the description of the chamberlain Chares, sets the total of Persian brides at 92, tells of 9,000 golden cups presented as gifts to the guests at the banquet. He adds that "Alexander went so far as to discharge all the debts owned by any of these guests, which cost him 9870 talents." Arrian includes other outlays of the Susa weddings and ups the amount to 20,000 talents –

that is, about 525 tons of silver!

These descriptions in the classical sources, dismissing the Susa weddings as a massive squander, are echoed by all later commentators up to the present. But this ignores the fact that, for Alexander, the Susa marriages constitute a political project of the highest order. This is where he reveals his blueprint for the future, and shows the new ruling class he wants to run his empire. The pity is that we only see a glimpse of his designs.

We get to know the princesses he and Hefaistion marry at Susa: two granddaughters of Sisygambis, which means that finally Alexander and his friend/lover have made sure that their children will be family. Now Hefaistion's unrivalled status is evident for the whole world to see. Alexander has made true his words to Sisygambis at Issos: "He, too, is Alexander." And as uncle to Alexander's heir, Hefaistion's political control will be unassailable, if he has to act as Regent of the empire.

As an additional precaution, Alexander includes among his wives the last daughter of Artaxerxes III, Parysatis, in case this branch of the Achaemenid dynasty would have to produce an alternative heir.

Also we hear of another curious detail at the Susa weddings. The former concubine Barsine, who according to conventional wisdom had been repudiated three years ago, gets the signal

honour of contributing no less than three of these ‘first ladies’ for the state apparatus. The brides for Ptolemy, Eumenes and Nearchos, top ranking men at Alexander’s side with a brilliant political future, are described as “two sisters and a daughter of Barsine”. In other words, they owe their marriage to Barsine’s status. Clear proof, in my view, that Alexander’s feelings for Barsine have been consistently underestimated in the classical sources.

Finally, we are told about three more Susa brides. Princess Amastris, the other granddaughter of Sisygambis, is married to Krateros. Apame, daughter of a former satrap in Baktria from the lineage of the prophet Zoroaster, is given to Seleukos. And for Perdikkas, there is a bride described as “daughter of the satrap of Media and present leader of the Zoroastrians, Atropates” – her own name being ignored.

So there we are: we don’t get to know the names, much less the family connections, of the vast majority of the 90-odd Persian brides whom Alexander has chosen for his top men. We can only guess at his reasons why he wanted these young women, and not others, at the side of the men governing his dominions.

Good reasons there were for sure. Krateros, whom Alexander will soon send off as ‘supreme theater commander’ in the West and intended Regent of the European territories, is drafted into

the core Royal Family through his marriage to Amastris. And general Perdikkas, army commander in Mesopotamia under Alexander's direct supervision, receives a wife who endows him with an influential Persian father-in-law.

The far-sighted election of the brides is confirmed later by the decisive support for Seleukos that his wife Apame obtains from the Persian nobles, during his long struggle to establish the Seleukid kingdom. If we had learned more about the other Persian brides and the political significance of their parents, we would have a much clearer picture of Alexander's plans. And about the information he uses for the election of these girls (or their families) he wants to play leading roles in his realm.

Only four months have passed since his return to Persia, after an absence of five years on his campaigns throughout Central Asia and India. He has no first-hand knowledge of his own about these brides, or the political usefulness of their family connections. So whose counsel does he trust himself to, for the choices that are to anchor the future of his world empire?

## **ALEXANDER'S WOMEN ADVISORS**

The only logical answer is that an extraordinarily well informed Persian woman helps him to choose the Susa brides. This brings me to my basic argument: right from the start,

Alexander has always been ready to accept intelligent women as his advisors – more often than men, by the way.

True, for his normal, daily activities Hefaistion is the one he trusts most. But apart from the indispensable support on the personal level he gives, Hefaistion is not seen to influence Alexander's vision as a statesman, or even as an army leader. (Remember the famous fight between Hefaistion and Krateros, when Alexander himself has to intervene to avoid a bloody outcome, and reacts furiously by shouting to Hefaistion that "he would be mad to think that, without Alexander, he had any significance!")

None of the other men in Alexander's intimate circle can boast that the king takes his advice on important matters. And worse, poor Parmenion is blackened to this very day, 23 centuries later, by anecdotes that paint him as a stupid oaf every time he tries to counsel Alexander.

On the other hand, nobody doubts that Alexander, in the initial years of his career, blindly trusts the political instincts of his mother Olympias. Later, he will often disregard her unstoppable stream of advice via letters. But we can not forget that his last heavyweight political decision, sending Krateros to Europe with the order to strip Antipater of all his powers, is exactly what his mother has been hammering on for years.

## ALEXANDER'S MOTHER

Olympias is an extraordinary woman. (In a personal aside, I confess that the main reason why I still like to revisit Oliver Stone's *Alexander* is the intense Olympias character portrayed there by Angelina Jolie; together with the unforgettable 'elder Ptolemy' created by Anthony Hopkins.)

As a politically active woman in Makedon, Olympias is not a total exception. Already a generation before, Alexander's grandmother Eurydike had acted forcefully to save the throne for her sons, with the help of the Athenian general Ifíkrates. Her intelligence and determination made it possible for Philip to become king, and he honoured her with a statue in the *Philippeion* at Olympia.

In this short text, I cannot include the full description of Olympias' life and deeds that she deserves. Therefore I recommend the thoroughly researched biography published by professor Elizabeth Carney in 2006. At this point, I will limit myself to underscore one aspect of Olympias' life that also features in Carney's *Olympias*. That is, the highly unusual decision of king Philip and the princess from Molossia (Olympias, though in that period she still calls herself Myrtale) to choose the faraway island of Samothrace for their wedding site.

Molossia borders on Makedon: bride and

groom could have met for their marriage ‘at your place or mine’, saving themselves much travel hardship. Professor Carney tells us that Samothrace was chosen because Makedon sponsored the *Mysteries* religious festival on this island. I think that Myrtale preferred precisely these Mysteries, because they were related to the ‘old faith’ that had profound roots in Molossia. Its capital Dodona, birthplace of the princess, was famous for its oracle tree in the ancient grove of the Gaia/Great Goddess cult.

At her own religious initiation, the young princess had changed her birth name of Polyxena into Myrtale. In other words, she had dedicated herself to the myrtle, the symbol of the goddess Afrodite and her predecessor, the Great Goddess.

To me it is clear that Alexander felt deep respect for his mother’s faith; a religious ‘world vision’ that included such social values as equal rights for women. A vision he would later encounter again in the two other women whom he called “mother”.

After Alexander’s departure for Asia (March, 334 BC), Olympias and her daughter Kleopatra, his only full sister, often act publicly as his social or political representatives. They do so apart from –or even against– the regent Antipater. For example, to combat widespread famine in Makedon and Molossia, they order and pay grain transports from faraway suppliers. This coincides



with the moment when Alexander sends them a substantial amount of money in golden ‘darik’ coins, the product/booty of his sack of Gaza in 332 BC. Evidently he has appointed them to manage his charity programme on the home front, to increase his popularity there.

Plutarch goes one step further and states that mother and daughter set up “a political faction against Antipater”. This is something that can only happen with the approval of the king. It is perfectly logical that Alexander takes steps to prevent that his regent Antipater could exceed the powers allotted to him. In her letters, Olympias accuses Antipater over and again of abuse of power. Whatever the motive, it is evident that Alexander has full confidence in the political know-how of his mother and sister.

Both have all the necessary experience and wit. Olympias has been through all possible variations of power politics at the side of –and at times, against– her husband king Philip. Kleopatra is queen of Molossia since 336 BC and Regent for her under-age son. But around 325 BC she leaves the government there in the hands of her mother; in correspondence with Athens, Olympias calls Molossia “my kingdom”. Kleopatra returns to her birthplace Pella, the capital of Makedon, to be Alexander’s *shadow Regent* there.

**ADA, QUEEN OF KARIA**

In the meantime, Alexander has found himself more women advisors. The first one appears right at the beginning of his Asian conquests: queen Ada of Karia, a small but prosperous country on the southern frontier of Ionia (today, the southwest of Turkey). But when he has his first personal encounter with Ada, she has fallen on bad times.

Ada is a worthy daughter of the Hekatomnid dynasty that has carved out for Karia a special place within the Persian empire. Her father Hekatomnos and her elder brother Maussolo have taken advantage of the relaxed Persian control over the provinces under the amiable High King Artaxerxes II. (And also, the initial years of his anything but amiable successor Artaxerxes III *Ochus*, who first has to subdue other rebellious dominions).

Hekatomnos and Maussolo are in theory satraps for Persia, but in reality independent rulers of their kingdom. Over time, the energetic Maussolo raises Karia to a first-rate naval power. His legacy is impressive, quite apart from his spectacular ‘Mausoleum’ that will set the example for –and give its name to– all later monumental tombs. As his successors, queen Ada and her husband king Hidrieus are “the most powerful princes in Western Asia”, the historian Theopompos assures.

Persia draws on, but envies, this flourishing power. When Ada has become dowager queen

after the death of her husband in 344 BC, the Persians persuade her younger brother Pixodaro to stage a palace coup. They calculate that a civil war in Karia will weaken the country and allow them to recover control. The ploy is partially successful: Pixodaro submits to Persia again and Ada, expelled from the capital Halikarnassos, is hard pressed to hold on to her last castle, Alinda. But the situation changes dramatically when Alexander appears on the scene. Arrian writes:

“This queen Ada was daughter of Hekatomnos and wife of her brother Hidrieus, as the Karian usage permitted. When Hidrieus was dying, he confided the administration of affairs to her, for it had been a custom in Asia, ever since the time of Semiramis, even for women to rule men. But Pixodaro expelled her from the rule, and seized the administration of affairs himself. On the death of Pixodaro, his son-in-law Orontobates was sent by the king of the Persians to rule over the Karians. Ada only retained Alinda, the strongest place in Karia.

When Alexander invaded Karia she went to meet him, offering to surrender Alinda to him, and adopting him as her son. Alexander confided Alinda to her, and did not think the title of son

unworthy of his acceptance. Moreover, when he had captured Halikarnassos and become master of the rest of Karia, he granted her the privilege of ruling over the whole country.”

Alexander decides to sustain Ada as an independent sovereign in Karia. After all, he has the guarantee that, as her sole *son*, he will inherit the dominion back. But as long as she lives, Alexander will never consider Karia as one of his conquered dominions, despite all the hard fighting his army had to go through there. This he makes abundantly clear in his speech at Opis<sup>3</sup> where he sums up all the territories won by the Makedonians in his long campaigns: Karia is very notably absent in his list of conquests in Asia Minor.

Ada reigns in Karia again, but Arrian cannot really conceive that Alexander would allow *a woman even to rule men*, so he adds that “Ada was appointed to act as his viceroy”. But the truth is that Alexander feels perfectly comfortable leaving her in Karia as a queen in her own right, with full government powers.

Plutarch too is unable to see Ada in a different light from his submissive Greek women. So he does not tell about her qualities as a ruler, but as a doting mother to Alexander:

“Queen Ada kept sending him meats and delicacies every day, finally offering him such cooks and bakers as were thought

to be masters of their craft. Alexander demurred politely. He told her he needed none of them, because he already had better cooks: a night march to get him ready for the morning meal, and short rations to prepare him for the evening meal.”

To the contrary of Arrian and Plutarch, however, Alexander does fully appreciate the mettle of his new ‘mother’. Ada is a born royal who will administer the country wisely, and whose advice on statecraft can be very interesting to him.

Karia’s rulers have maintained a special relation with the Achaemenid dynasty ever since queen Artemisia was honoured by High King Xerxes himself. (He asked her to supervise the education of several of his sons.) And Ada’s dynasty has been keeping a keen eye on political upheavals in Persia for three generations running. In recent times, both Ada’s brother Maussolo, as a sometime ally of Persia in the Satraps’ Revolt, and Ada’s husband Hidrieus as the key provider of naval support to Artaxerxes III, must have exchanged military and political intelligence with top-level Achaemenids. So Ada knows who truly counts in Susa. In fact, she is by far the most probable source of Alexander’s knowledge of the Persian queen-mother’s place within that power structure.

The queen of Karia has updated information that may be helpful for Alexander's assault on Persia. He knows his classics, and has learnt much from Xenophon and other authors –like Herodotos, the historian from Ada's own capital Halikarnassos– about the awesome past of the Persian empire. But that is background information, only useful when one has a trustworthy informer to tell the difference between what is relevant or not to the present situation. And who would be more willing to feed him up to the last scrap of secret intelligence about Persia, than his new 'mother'?

The deep respect that Alexander feels and demonstrates towards Ada also is a consequence of that curious episode of the 'Karian bride', when a niece and namesake of Ada's was offered to marry the crown prince of Makedon. At that time, Alexander certainly had himself thoroughly updated on the Karian dynasty. And now that he gets to know Ada personally, he immediately sees that this woman has as much experience of power politics as his own mother.

Moreover, I think that Ada also reminded him of Olympias in that their views were based on similar religious and social tenets. A vision that Olympias identified herself with at the Mysteries of Samothrace; and that in Ada's case was also strongly related to the worship of the Great Goddess. (In the Karian vernacular, her father's name means "Servant of the Temple of the Great

Goddess”; and the name of her brother Maussolo derives from the title of the Karian mother goddess Ma.)

With women of such quality Alexander finds himself in a comfortable relation between equals. It allows him to establish the bond of profound trust and attachment that he expresses by calling them “mother”.

## THE SYRIAN SOOTHSAYER AND THE INDIAN QUEEN

But before I move on to describe the *adoptive mother* who plays the most fascinating role in Alexander’s career, we will have a little intermezzo with two different, and rather mysterious, women.

The first is a soothsayer. We do not even know her name, and in the end she will disappear from the scene as unheralded as she came into Alexander’s life. But her presence of several years among his most intimate attendants turns out to be absolutely vital.

She would have remained hidden in the swirling mists of history, if it were not for Alexander’s engineer Aristoboulos. He knew her well, because on the long campaign through Persia, Central Asia and India they both had free access to Alexander’s tent. In his memoirs, Aristoboulos describes her as follows:

“A Syrian woman, who was under the

inspiration of the deity, used to follow Alexander about. At first she was a subject of mirth to Alexander and his courtiers. But when all that she said in her inspiration was seen to be true, he no longer treated her with neglect. She was allowed to have free access to him both by night and day, and she often took her stand near him even when he was asleep.”

All historians agree she saved him, in 327 BC, from being murdered by his page Hermolaos. Unexpectedly, one night she asked Alexander to stay away from his tent. She did not say why. He did not return there until the shift had changed and other pages had taken over Hermolaos’ duty.

Shortly afterwards it was found that he had been persuaded to try and murder Alexander that night. He failed because the Syriac had intervened. From that night on, nobody in the army would question Alexander if he acted on this soothsayer’s advice. She was one of the decisive women in his life, even if we know nearly nothing about her.

### **KLEOFIS OF MASSAGA**

Another scarcely documented ‘woman of Alexander’ is the Indian queen Kleofis. In 326 BC



she ruled over Massaga, a heavily fortified city in the Katgala pass that controls access to the Swat valley (in present-day Pakistan). Her son the king had recently died. Against the opinion of Kleofis, who preferred a compromise with Alexander, the garrison commander decided to put up fierce resistance against the transit of the Makedonian army. As a result, Alexander decided it was too much of a risk to pass by Massaga and leave such a threat at his rear.

The conquest of the fort turned into a bloodbath, and the killings did not end until Kleofis in person intervened. She went to Alexander to present her submission, and placed her youngest child –some say, her grandchild– on his knees. He then attended to her plea to save what remained of her city, and also decided to reinstate her as queen of Massaga.

Diodoros reports: “Impressed by Alexander’s generosity, the queen sent him expensive gifts, and promised to obey all his orders”. But he too was fascinated, an old chronicle remembers: “Alexander was visibly impressed by Kleofis. Her bearing made clear beyond any doubt she was of high lineage, and endowed with all the qualities of a royal ruler. He stayed at her side in the city for several days,” we can read in the *Metz Epitome*.

Centuries after the fact, however, some Roman historians preferred to substitute the stately grandmother with a scandalous

seductress. Curtius is particularly spiteful with this Indian queen; Justin and others denigrate her saying that “Cleophis recovered the throne by acting as a royal whore”. An unjustifiable smear without any base in the classical Greek sources, the academic experts assure.

Therefore, some think that the name Cleophis –or Cleophylis, in other versions– is a forced transcription in order to make it sound similar to Cleopatra. (The authentic name of the queen was “Kripa”, specialists in Sanscrit language affirm.) The fact that this taint appears only in the days of the first Caesars makes it doubly suspect. In those times, a writer could profitably excite the public with a Cleophis modelled on Cleopatra, the stereotypical ‘depraved oriental queen’ created by Augustus’ propaganda machine.

In any case there was no need for scandalous suggestions, to explain why Alexander would want to interrupt his march on India to stay some days with Kleofis/Kripa. The chronicles emphasize that she had “all the qualities of a royal ruler”; that would include, in the first place, a thorough intelligence of the land.

Here, Alexander was moving over terrain that was totally unknown to him and to his staff. Not even Cyrus the Great had reached this far. And the Makedonian conqueror had plans that went much further. He wanted to subdue the whole country to the coast of the (Indian) Ocean, not yet knowing that this meant covering vast

distances. Kleofis had impressed him as a sensible woman whose counsel he should listen to; and as a queen with intellectual capacities similar to those of his mother Olympias and his *adoptive mothers* Ada and Sisygambis.

But for Curtius and other Roman sensationalists it was more attractive to thrill their audience with insinuations about the sexual charms of an oriental queen. This also explains how she became the source of inspiration for another mythical 'love affair' of Alexander: the legend of his liaison with Candace. This impossible event (for Candace was said to be queen of Nubia, a place he never reached) is a staple of the *Alexander Romance* tradition. Now, let's return to reality.

## SISYGAMBIS OF PERSIA

The key person in the decisive formation of Alexander's world vision, which made him evolve from *barbarian* conqueror to heir of the Achaemenid dynasty, was the Persian queen-mother Sisygambis. At first sight, this conclusion does not appear in the classical sources. They simply relate a few anecdotes about her. The best known is about an incident that features not only in all history books but also on famous paintings.

On November 5th, 333 BC, king Darius III suffers a bloody rout and flees at all speed from the battlefield of Issos. His family remains behind

in an undefended rear camp, that is plundered by an undisciplined horde of soldiers. The Persian women hear the news that the king's war chariot stands empty amidst piles of corpses. They fear he has found his death there, and raise a wail of mourning and terror.

Alexander is told of the reason for that noise. He sends one of his Companions, who speaks some Persian, to control the situation. Laomedon orders safety measures for Darius' family, tells them that the Persian king did not die but flee, and gives them Alexander's pledge that they will receive a decent treatment according to their rank. Alexander himself will come to visit them the next morning, he announces.

To pronounce her plea for her family, Sisygambis steps forward when Alexander, accompanied by Hefaistion, arrives at the tent. She falls on her knees – but not before Alexander.

Diodoros writes:

“So at daybreak, the king took with him the most valued of his Companions, Hefaistion, and came to the women. They were both dressed alike, but Hefaistion was taller and more handsome. Sisygambis took him for the king and did him obeisance. As the others present made signs to her and pointed to Alexander with their hands she was embarrassed by her mistake, but made a new start and did obeisance

to Alexander.

He, however, cut in and said: “Never mind, Mother, for actually he too is Alexander.” By thus addressing the aged woman as ‘Mother’, with this kindest of terms he gave the promise of coming benefactions to those who had been wretched a moment before. Assuring Sisygambis that she would be his second mother, he immediately ratified in action what he had just done orally.”

This description –Alexander’s friendly reaction to the dumb mistake of a doddering old lady– sets the tone for all further references to Sisygambis by the classical Greek and Roman writers. And that means they underestimate her in a seriously misleading way.

Alexander has sound reasons to address Sisygambis as ‘Mother’: she is just as an exceptional woman as his own mother Olympias. Or maybe even more outstanding, in view of her uncommon long experience at Persia’s center of power. In that era, few women reach such a high age as the 70 years that Sisygamis has at Issos.

Many of those years she has lived at the court of her father the High King Artaxerxes II. For she married late; much later than her elder sister Rodogune who was married out to the family of Artasyras, the *King’s Eye* (that is, the chief of the

secret service).

At palace, Sisygambis must have received a high level education. Her parents Artaxerxes and Stateira worshipped the goddess Anahita, a Persian successor to the Great Goddess/Inanna deity. That meant they had a ‘modern’ view on the role of women in society. Her aunt Roxane, sister of Stateira, was widely known in Persia as an independent-minded, publicly active woman: “Not only beautiful to behold, but also extremely expert in handling the bow and javelin”, the court doctor Ktesias recorded.

Professor Amélie Kuhrt, a top expert on the period, adds: “Although this is the only surviving mention of a Persian woman equipped with military and hunting skills, it is likely that the education of royal and noble women included this generally.” (Kuhrt 2007, p. 600.)

It was probably the fact that she stood her ground and would not hesitate to confront adversaries –even in the dangerous court intrigues–, that became Roxane’s undoing. She was condemned to death on a (false?) accusation of incest. Ktesias, who loves sensational gossip, says that she was “flayed alive” on orders of the queen-mother Parysatis.

With such a family background, Sisygambis will not have been a submissive wallflower, either. And her mother Stateira (later, poisoned by her mother-in-law Parysatis in another political intrigue) must have taught her the hard

lessons of power-mongering at the Persian court.

The cruelty of political infighting at Susa and Persepolis was brought home to Sisygambis when her half-brother Artaxerxes III *Ochus* had all his male siblings murdered, to occupy the throne in 358 BC. Her cousin and husband Arshama was one of those dozens of assassinated Achaemenids. It is a wonder that she herself, with her two nearly adult sons, escaped the bloodbath. Her eldest, Darius, later became an admired warrior when he single-handedly routed the champion of the rebellious Kadoussians. As a reward, he was appointed satrap of Armenia, the birthplace of his grandmother Stateira. This turned out to be his stepping stone to the throne, after the sons of Artaxerxes III had been eliminated in diverse palace coups.

In other words: by the time she became queen-mother, in 336 BC, Sisygambis had personally seen in action the entire *Who's Who* of Persian power politics, and was perfectly capable of judging each and all of them. At the Achaemenid court the office of queen-mother signified, already since the days of the famous Atossa (daughter of Cyrus the Great, wife of Darius the Great, and queen-mother of Xerxes), a daily exercise in political decision-making. This was the result of a long tradition. The specialist Dr. Maria Brosius states:

“The playwright Aischylos chose Atossa as the central character of his *Persai* for

an even more critical reason; not just because she was a link between three kings, but primarily because she held **the most important position at the Persian court.**" <...>

"The mother of the Persian king, Sisygambis, was also acknowledged as Alexander's mother. It appears it was politically expedient to express the relationship between ruler/son and predecessor/parents in a positive way. For the new ruler it was not sufficient to gain political power through military superiority. He also needed to demonstrate his right to power by officially acknowledging his predecessor and his predecessor's mother. There is reason to believe this practice originated in the Near East; it is attested as early as the end of the second millennium BC. <...> It is clear that the king-mother's position was recognised at the Assyrian and Babylonian courts; the Persian court followed their example."

I would not doubt for a moment that Alexander knew this, when he addressed Sisygambis as 'Mother'. But that was not something he had learnt from Aristotle, nor from the Greek writers he knew by memory; though



Xenofon might have put him on the trail. What we see here, I am sure, is the result of the wise counsel of his *other mother*, Ada of Karia, who had all the details of Persian court etiquette at her fingertips.

At Issos, Alexander's homage to Sisygambis can not yet be ascribed to advice from Barsine, who would not be brought to his tent until several weeks later. But it does make sense to deduce that the further evolution of Alexander's relationship with Sisygambis owes a great deal to Barsine's explanations about the real status of her great-aunt the queen mother; plus her help as interpreter for their conversations.

By the way, I would also posit that Sisygambis' *dumb mistake* at Issos very much amused Alexander for being anything but a mistake. The queen mother had a full night to think through her first meeting with Alexander. And of course she knew perfectly well that Alexander was not so tall.

A whole crowd of Persian princes and courtiers had taken a sharp look at Alexander on the battlefield of the Granikos. All classical sources state they were vying with each other for the opportunity to attack him personally. No doubt they recounted their experience of him in full as soon as they returned to court. In Persia it was a longstanding tradition to describe the High King as a tall man, to stress his "natural majesty". In the case of Darius III this was borne out by

reality: he was famous for being a tall, handsome man. So the courtiers must have told him, and Sisygambis, over and over again that Alexander in comparison was a midget.

In consequence I suspect that Sisygambis, with the apparent error of directing her obeisance to Hefaistion, tried to counterbalance her captive's disadvantage by upstaging Alexander. His swift and intelligent reaction must have given her, as an expert judge of character, as much to think about as his decision to address her as "Mother".

Before long, they had built up a real mother-son relationship. This is clear from Curtius' mention that Alexander, in accordance with the traditional homage of Persian men to their mother, would never take a seat in Sisygambis' presence until she invited him to do so. The anecdote reveals that they often had conversations; for how else could the courtiers gossip that Alexander "always" waited for her invitation to sit down and talk? Being a Roman – thus lacking any such courtesy towards women –, Curtius is so surprised that he exclaims: "There cannot be more solid proof of the great respect women received in that country at the time."

The fact that Sisygambis retained the full influence of a queen-mother soon became common knowledge among the Persians, as shown by the 'Uxian affair'. In December 331, Alexander installed Sisygambis in her own palace

of Susa again, with all the trappings of her rank. Then, the army went on to complete the conquest of the Persian heartland. Advancing on Persepolis, Alexander met fierce resistance from the tribe of the Uxians. He beat them back, and besieged their leader Medates in his stronghold.

Expecting total defeat and harsh punishment, Medates sent a plea to the queen-mother through family channels: his wife was a niece of hers. Sisygambis then appealed to Alexander by private message. He was so pleased at the opportunity to do her a favor publicly, that he not only spared the lives of Medates and his warriors, but also gave the Uxians a tax remission to show how much he honoured Sisygambis.

Queen Ada's advice that Sisygambis was anything but a doddering old lady (plus the family stories about her great-aunt that Barsine would tell Alexander in the intimacy of their bedchamber) made him realise that he had found his best possible source of information on Persia. He kept her at his side for two years, from November 333 in Issos to December 331 in Susa. Quite understandable, as it must have taken him a long time to convince Sisygambis that his plans coincided, at least in part, with her interests. For that was the simple truth.

Besides the personal considerations – Alexander certainly came to feel for Sisygambis a filial attachment similar to his love for his

mother Olympias–, they also could be of use to each other. Professor Carney makes this comparison of both personal and political factors: “Alexander had, in his mother and full sister, representatives of his personal interests on the scene at home. In Asia he had Sisygambis, whose actions after his death tell us that she had reached the conclusion that the fate of her family was tied to Alexander’s survival.” (Carney 2000).

Sisygambis could not avoid, although she tried<sup>4</sup>, that her firstborn and this *adoptive son* would again go to war. But above all, she was an Achaemenid princess, a daughter of Artaxerxes II, and a queen mother who saw it as her task to avoid needless sufferings for her country and her people. She reached the conclusion that Alexander sincerely aimed to integrate the conquered territories with the least possible damage into his dominions. (Also, for the practical reason that his small army would never suffice to occupy the vast Persian empire). Thus she must have accepted him first as *the lesser evil*; and in the end, as a man who could become a worthy successor to the venerated Cyrus the Great. Alexander shared this veneration: he took special pains to have Cyrus’ ransacked tomb restored to its former majesty.

Alexander’s attitude in Egypt, where he demonstrates his profound regard for the local population and their traditions in becoming their new Pharaoh, is not only a message to the other

peoples Persia has submitted. It also is a writing on the wall for Sisygambis. In Persia, too, Alexander wants to reach a *status quo* understanding with the local population and the ruling class, to continue their traditions under his kingship. The first practical proof of this comes at his triumphal entry in Babylon.

It is October 22nd, 331 BC; only a short three weeks have passed since the decisive rout of Darius III at Gaugamela. Babylon is to be the new capital of Alexander's world empire. But with the exception of a military control unit under Makedonian command, he hands the city and the region over to a Persian governor!

And more, to a man who until now has fought against him with all the forces at his disposal: general Mazaios, one of the few Persians to earn well deserved praise for his actions on the battlefield of Gaugamela. Mazaios also is an experienced governor. He has administered the territories of Kilikia, Syria and Fenicia for the successive Persian kings from Artaxerxes II (the father of Sisygambis) to Darius.

Someone near at hand –there was no time for wider consultation– must have given Alexander convincing information that precisely Mazaios will be the best man to rule Babylon for him. The facts prove that this appointment was based on first-rate intelligence: Mazaios continued in office as long as he lived, to the full satisfaction of both Alexander and the population.

Someone evidently knew that the Babylonians would not resent this satrap as ‘a Persian in foreign service’. Someone who could reveal to Alexander such intimate details as the fact that Mazaios had a Babylonian wife, and that their son bore a typically Babylonian name.

Also, someone with sufficient moral authority must have persuaded Mazaios to accept Alexander’s offer. An appointment which at that moment surely carried the taint of coat-turning; so it needed explaining how valuable this precedent would be for the political stability of Persia under Alexander.

This someone, all logic shouts out, was Sisygambis. Being slightly older than Mazaios, she had seen his brilliant career from the start. First, as a young officer promoted on merit in the reign of her own father. Then, as a neighbor – Mazaios was the governor of Syria when Sisygambis accompanied her firstborn to the satrapy of Armenia– his abilities must have impressed her. Later, as a queen mother, Sisygambis consented to a nominal/political betrothal of her first granddaughter to this capable servant of the throne.

Putting up Mazaios to govern Babylon for her new ‘son’ meant that Sisygambis had opted definitively for a continuation of the Achaemenid dynasty through Alexander.

An option that also throws new light on a

curious incident during the battle of Gaugamela. At a critical moment, Mazaios succeeds in sending a flying brigade around Alexander's flank, and this Persian cavalry takes the Greek base camp in the rear. It contains not only the field hospital and the warehouses with provisions and booty, but also the tents of Sisygambis and her household including a son and two daughters of Darius. No doubt it is part of Darius' plan to recover his family this way.

The Persian troops begin a massacre in the field hospital, and loot the warehouses. Sisygambis' servants go to see what is happening, and discover that their liberators have arrived. "Most of the female captives rushed off to welcome the Persians," Diodoros writes (XVII, 59), "but the mother of Darius, Sisygambis, did not heed when the women called upon her, but remained placidly where she was."

Not because she fears she will be unable to return with this cavalry troop to the main force of Darius: elsewhere it has been related that Sisygambis and her retinue often ride on horses. Also, all sources confirm that at this moment the Persian brigade controls the grounds. And neither does the argument that the outcome of the battle might still turn against the Persians later, provide a convincing reason. If Sisygambis had really felt a long-cherished desire to be freed, it is unbelievable that she would not make use of this golden opportunity. No: the only explanation is

that Sisygambis has already chosen a future with Alexander.

This is also the meaning of an apocryphal quotation of Sisygambis (it probably has its roots in the Persian *Alexander Romance*) that tells the following story.

In the summer of 330 BC, Darius has been murdered at Thara by the satrap of Bactria, Bessos – who, being a relative of the Achaemenids, immediately proclaims himself High King. The painful news reaches Susa, where Alexander has installed Sisygambis half a year ago: he is sending her Darius' remains for a state burial. The courtiers tell the queen mother that, in accordance with custom, she should be seen publicly in deep mourning over the deceased High King Darius, her son. Sisygambis refuses indignantly: "My son the High King is in good health and his name is Alexander."

A noteworthy saying indeed, when we take into account that Alexander has never been formally proclaimed High King. But why not? This runs counter to his well known methods. In Greece he has painstakingly followed all the formal procedures to be proclaimed *Hegemon*. In Egypt he has faithfully executed all the prescribed ceremonies to be crowned Pharaoh. (And he continues to ensure he is seen to respect the traditions: nowadays we can still observe him depicted on an inner wall of the Luxor temple, as



the Pharaoh performing his religious duties.)

Persia has become his most important kingdom by far. Especially now that Darius has died and there is an active pretender in the field, a man of Bessos' weight who is wearing the upright tiara of the sovereign, all logic would dictate that Alexander should have himself officially proclaimed High King. And yet he did not deem it necessary. Why?

Because Sisygambis has already **made** him king of Persia by publicly calling him "my son the High King". Sisygambis' blessing is decisive for the Persians, because it re-enacts such sanctified historical precedents as the elevation of Cyrus the Great and Darius I to the throne.

In this matter, professor Amélie Kuhrt cites both the *Persica* of Ktesias and the *Cyropaedia* of Xenophon. They relate how Astyages, king of the Medes, was displaced from the throne by his grandson and vassal Cyrus.

Ktesias writes (FGrH 688 F9): "Having been seized and placed in heavy fetters, he was freed by Cyrus himself a little later and honoured as a father. At first, Cyrus also honoured the daughter, Amytis, as a mother, but later she became his wife." [Initially, Cyrus was unable to conquer Baktria, but] "when the Baktrians learnt Astyages had become Cyrus' father, and Amytis his mother and wife, they submitted to Amytis and Cyrus of their own accord." Note that Amytis is named before Cyrus. Also, it is clear that the

terms “as a father” and “as a mother” are employed here purely as titles of political meaning. Astyages already was the grandfather of Cyrus, and it would have been considered a despicable incest if Cyrus had married his mother.

Xenofon (*Cyr.* VIII. 5.18) says that the old king of the Medes presented Cyrus to his daughter Amytis “who brought with her a crown <...>; and as the young woman was placing the crown on Cyrus’ head, the king said: “I give you too, Cyrus, my daughter as wife <...> and with her, as a dowry, I give you all of Media.” This idyllic depiction of the (in reality, armed and violent) takeover by Cyrus the Great, stands out for one detail of the utmost importance to the Persians: it is Amytis who crowns Cyrus. And that explains why the Baktrians submit to “Amytis and Cyrus”.

As for the mention that Cyrus honoured Amytis “as a mother”, professor Kuhrt emphasizes: “This must have been intended to be seen as part of the process of legitimization, i.e. making Cyrus heir to the Median throne; cf. the relationship between Alexander and Darius III’s mother Sisygambis, later; see Brosius 1996, 21-2: Sisygambis was acknowledged as Alexander’s mother, sic Diod. XVII 37.6”.

In other words, the public proclamation of a close personal tie to the most prominent women of the previous king legitimizes the new occupant

of the throne. That is why Alexander in the end marries Darius' daughter Barsine, as Cyrus has taken the daughter of Astyages for wife; and why Darius I has married Atossa, daughter of Cyrus and former wife of Cambyses. But of even higher rank is the title of (queen-) mother; that is why Amytis and Sisygambis are honoured as "Mother" by Cyrus and Alexander.

Moreover, we cannot forget the eye-catcher that Amytis is the one to crown Cyrus. This echoes a legitimization of still deeper roots – something of such great importance to the Persians, that they were still recounting it in their oral traditions of 1,500 years later.

In the 12th century AD, a first written version was published in Persia of an old saga about the war between Darius and Alexander. Even more than the *Sikandar-Nama*, this *Darab-Nama* offers significant explanations for Alexander's relationship with the royal women of Persia. For here we are told of how Alexander first fights against the father of a Persian princess and then against herself; but how he finally falls in love and marries her. Then she takes his hand, leads him to the throne of Persia, **and crowns him**.

The story elements of the *Darab-Nama* represent a cultural fusion of Old-Persian and Hellenistic lore. The first Darab (= Darius) in this long saga occupies the throne with military might and then marries the daughter of the previous

king. In other words, he is Darius the Great, and he legitimizes his takeover in the same way as Cyrus the Great before him (and Alexander later on). The last Darab in the story clearly represents Darius III, and his warlike daughter becomes the main character in the *Darab-Nama*.

Initially, this princess is presented as a sort of Amazon queen like Hippolyta or Penthesileia, but as the story unfolds she is revealed as a stand-in for the Persian goddess Anahita. The role of Anahita as the patron goddess of the throne, who gives –or takes away– the ‘Monarchy by the Grace of God’, is rooted in the worship of pre-historic divinities like the Great Goddess and Innana. Her importance to the Persians is so well known that centuries later, in Roman times, the writer Strabo still underlines that “Anahita was the goddess of Cyrus and his ancestors”.

The first High King who publicly appeals to Anahita in this capacity is Artaxerxes II, the father of Sisygambis. Among the many faithful in the empire who continue to worship Anahita, even far beyond the borders of Persia, Sisygambis must have carried extraordinary convincing power as the bearer of these traditional values. She was the last remaining symbol of the *golden age* of Artaxerxes II. This is what made her blessing for Alexander, suggesting the approval of Anahita, so decisive for the Persians.

Sisygambis supports Alexander because they

share a similar dream of a new glory period for the Achaemenid dynasty. Alexander not only has reconquered all the dominions of Cyrus the Great and reinstated his policy of religious tolerance; he will even widen the empire. That will demand the services of a numerous class of new rulers. Alexander and Sisygambis agree that Hellenes, Persians, Babylonians, Fenicians, Egyptians, Baktrians and all other inhabitants of the empire are entitled to contribute to the effort on equal terms. But they will be led by an integrated elite of mixed Greek-Persian descent: the offspring of the spectacular mass wedding in Susa.

In Alexander's own times, no one can have doubted this strategic aim of the Susa weddings. Contemporary writers must have made it so clear that Plutarch (in *Moralia* 338i) simply states it as a fact: "Alexander married Stateira, Darius' daughter, because of the policy of the empire." And, more in detail: "He himself set in the wedding song, as if he were elevating a hymn to the true friendship and union between the two greatest and mightiest peoples. For he, groom to one of the brides and at the same time godfather to all of them, united them all with the bonds of wedlock" (*Moralia*, 329e).

As this is so notoriously an imperial ceremony, the logical question comes up why Alexander does not celebrate it in the capital of his new empire, Babylon. (The vast amount of coins that Alexander issues here to finance his

imperial policies, all carry a special mark. With the monogram MTR, each of these tetradrachma coins proclaims that Babylon is the “MeTRopolis”: the mother-city of all Alexander’s dominions.) This enormous metropolis offers all the splendour an imperial wedding could ask for: no want of palaces or efficient providers of luxury goods here. And yet, in the spring of 324 BC Alexander and his dozens of prospective companion grooms travel not to Babylon, but to Susa in order to marry their new Persian wives. Why?

Evidently, because that is where the brides are staying, having been carefully prepared for this historical event. It must have taken months to reunite all these girls and their families there, and to coach them for the ceremony.

We know that some of the brides had been in Susa together for quite some time already, to be educated for this great moment. The historian Memnon of Herakleia tells us that Amastris, the other granddaughter of Sisygambis, has been educated together with her cousins the princesses Barsine/Stateira and Drypetis. In the household of their grandmother Sisygambis, of course, at the Old Palace of Susa. There, Alexander had already appointed Greek teachers for the princesses as early as 331 BC.

I am convinced that the ‘young ladies’ finishing school’ at Sisygambis’ palace took on more blue-blooded pupils in the subsequent

years. For example Apame, the bride for Seleukos and future queen of the Seleukid empire. She had become an orphan in 328 BC, the daughter of a proud warrior satrap who had caused the Makedonian army many a problem until his own family, to obtain Alexander's favour, had murdered him. In who else but Sisygambis could Alexander trust to educate such an orphan to become a worthy wife for a Makedonian top general?

And of course, who else but Sisygambis could keep Alexander abreast of the political status, or social value, of the dozens of candidate-brides (and their families) he needed for his grand scheme? There is no other possible conclusion but that, by 324 BC, the Old Palace of Susa had become the central stage where, under the supervision of Sisygambis, the future ruling class for a world empire was being prepared.



The plan failed miserably when Alexander met his premature death in 323 BC. (Though it did not fail entirely: Amastris and Apame still were to play a very special role in history). But the queen-mother immediately understood that this was the real end of the Achaemenid dynasty. It is striking –and in a way, a belated acknowledgement of Sisygambis' true role– that the last fact that Diodoros mentions in his

Alexander biography, reads as follows:

“After the king’s death, Sisygambis, Darius’ mother, mourned his passing and her own bereavement; and coming to the limit of her life, she refrained from food and died on the fifth day, abandoning life painfully, but not without glory.”

Right he was. She had given *her son* the loyalty of Persia that made his glory possible. With Alexander, Sisygambis aimed for a new golden age of the Achaemenid Empire. Without Alexander, the future was dead.



Silver coin issued c. 300 BC by queen Amastris, as its inscription shows. At the time, she ruled the kingdom of Herakleia Pontos on the Black Sea coast of Asia Minor. Over the years,



this coin was struck in versions that varied in small details, allowing the woman figure to be identified either as the queen or as her protecting deity, the Persian goddess Anahita.

This is the nearest thing to a portrait of Sisygambis' granddaughter we have. And it probably also gives us a quite approximate idea of what the Persian queen-mother herself must have looked like to her contemporaries.

## THE GREAT GODDESS, INANNA, ANAHITA AND ISIS

The first author in world literature we know by name, the priestess Enheduanna, wrote hymns to the goddess Inanna. Active around 2300 BC, Enheduanna was a daughter of Sargon, king of Sumer and Akkad. He sent her as high priestess to the conquered Sumerian capital Ur. In that city, writing had been invented; at first, c. 3200 BC, for administrative purposes only, but soon put to literary use.

The opening words (and therefore, title) of her best known hymn, are *Nin-me-shar-ra*: “Lady of all the Divine Powers.” Enheduanna describes her worship for the goddess in a very personal, intimate way. She also tells about the troubles of her times, including her expulsion from (and later return to) her temple in Ur. As a literary text, it is the earliest report of an individual’s consciousness of her inner life.

Her hymns, and the earlier mythology of the

goddess Inanna, have been discovered –copied by many generations of scribes and librarians– on clay tablets of c. 1750 BC, excavated in Nippur at the end of the 19th century. In other archives, similar versions have been found. Put together, they made possible a near complete reconstruction of Enheduanna’s hymns; and of even older texts, like *The Descent of Inanna*, 412 lines of Sumerian cuneiform text on clay tablets. The opening verse of the *Descent* says:

“From the Great Above, the goddess set her mind on the Great Below. Inanna abandoned heaven, abandoned earth, and descended to the Underworld.”

It then goes on to tell the following myth. Before leaving, Inanna told her handmaid Ninshubur that if she should fail to return, the maid was to ask for help from various gods. Dressed in all her finery, jewels and insignia of power, Inanna presented herself at the first gate of the Underworld, saying that she had come for the funerary rites of Gugalanna, husband of her sister Queen Ereshkigal.

The gatekeeper reported this and received the order that Inanna was permitted to proceed upon surrendering her crown.

“Neti, chief gatekeeper of the Underworld, obeyed his queen:

He opened the seven gates of the Underworld...

He said to the pure Inanna: "Come Inanna, enter!"

But as she entered the first gate, from her head the *sugurra*, the crown of the steppe, was removed. "What is this?"

She was told: "Silence, Inanna!

A divine rule of the Underworld has been fulfilled.

Inanna, you may not question the rites of the Underworld!"

A similar procedure followed at each of the gates. One after another, Inanna lost all her insignia and clothing, until finally she entered the Underworld naked. Thus she appeared before Ereshkigal and the Seven Judges of the Underworld, who cast the glance of death upon her. Inanna became a corpse, and her body was hung on a hook like a joint of meat.

When Ninshubur applied for help, only the god Enki gave assistance. He sent two creatures of his making into the Underworld and had them implore to Ereshkigal that she gave Inanna's corpse to them. They then sprinkled it with the food of life and the water of life that Enki had provided them, and revived Inanna.

But Ereshkigal had made them promise that if Inanna returned to the upper world, another person must be sent down as her ransom. So when she came back to earth, a crowd of demons accompanied her seeking a substitute victim.

Those who had mourned for her were safe. But when this ghastly entourage made its way to Inanna's own city, Erech, they found her husband, showing no signs of mourning but sitting contentedly on the throne in kingly attire. Inanna, enraged at his callous behaviour, handed Dumuzi over to the demons. Later, however, his sister Geshtinanna was allowed to substitute for him each half year in the Underworld.

Among various scholarly interpretations of the text, one points at a possible astronomical background to this myth. In Sumer, Inanna is identified in the sky as the planet Venus. At the gate of the Underworld, she said she had come for the funerary rites of Ereshkigal's husband Gud-gal-anna "The Great Bull of Heaven". That name also designates a constellation that disappears from the night sky shortly before Venus.

Astronomically, Venus has a periodic motion of about 584 days. After the first 365 nights (or one year), the brightness of the planet gradually declines, until it disappears entirely from visibility for a period of 78 nights. So Venus/Inanna's visit to the Underworld, and the gradual stripping away of her finery/brightness, could have been a mythical explanation to this sequence of astronomical events.

Another well known interpretation is based on psychological views. Especially the Neo-Jungian school offers insights into ancient

‘descent’-myths (Inanna, Persephone, Psyche) as descriptions of an interior journey: we must enter our own underworld to find our true self. That always is a painful voyage.

Various layers of consciousness have to be explored “going in through the gates and leaving behind our insignia” (our preconceived image of ourselves). Old fears and pains have to be overcome, before we can reach the final inner dimension. There, we become one again with the cosmic essence of Being. Once our old body (former personality/convictions) dies off, the soul may be revived with the ancient *magic* truths (“sprinkled with the food of life, the water of life”), to return to the earth as a more wholesome being.

In this interpretation, Inanna’s ‘descent’ is the description of an initiation and healing process. Myth as a road map, showing how to reconnect our Above (conscious thought) with our Below (unconscious feeling); and how to bring back to the surface of our life our “spark of the divine”, through a return to long forgotten or suppressed values.

The goddesses whose stories the ancients told, are powerful and loved. They watch over the seasons of fertility; over love and passion, war and justice; over the Land of the Dead and the Heaven of Stars. But earlier, in a matriarchal era, there had been only one Great Goddess/Great

Mother who embodied all the divine. Under the influence –and finally, dominance– of conquerors with a patriarchal culture, the Great Goddess gradually lost terrain. Masculine gods appeared at her side, and were later set above her. The Dumuzi sequel in Inanna's *Descent* (a husband, punished for having occupied her throne, but finally returning to share power, if only for half of each year) may represent the transitional stage in this conflict.

Possibly, in Sumer the Great Goddess already had carried the name/title of Inanna –which means ‘Lady of Heavens’– even before patriarchal culture took over. For sometimes she is described as a once all-powerful, but now dispossessed, wandering goddess. But she never lost her title of ‘giver of kingship’.

In the end, the Great Goddess is worshipped in the form of a new generation of divinities with different names or titles: Inanna in Sumer, Ishtar/Astarté in Babylon, Isis in Egypt, Kubaba/Cybele in Asia Minor, and Anahita in Central Asia. They still are mighty, but have to share their rule with male gods. In some aspects they are ‘driven underground’ or literally sent to reign in the underworld, like the goddess Ereshkigal, Inanna's sister.

Further to the West, we will find the powers of the Great Goddess diluted among no less than seven goddesses: Hera, Hestia, Demeter,

Persefone, Artemis, Afrodite, and Athene. Even the underworld has been taken away from her, now to be ruled by the masculine god Hades.

## **“GREAT LADY ANAHITA, LIFE-GIVER OF OUR NATION”**

An Eastern descendant of the Great Goddess is Anahita, the Water Goddess. Her worship begins on the banks of the Oxus (Amu Darya) river in Bactria, spreads later to Babylon, and from there on to western Asia. It also reaches Armenia, ancient Egypt –where she is depicted as an armed and mounted goddess– and central Persia. There she becomes one of the ruling deities.

Anahita is a maiden Goddess of the Moon, Fertility and War. Her full name, Ardvi Sura Anahita, means “the humid, strong, pure one.” As the Ruler of Water, she embodies both physical and metaphorical qualities of water, especially the fertilizing flow of water from the fountain in the stars. In time, Anahita is identified with the Babylonian goddess Anaitis, and in the Hellenistic period, with Afrodite, Artemis/Diana, and Athena. She becomes immensely popular all over the empire.

Zoroastrian texts name Zranka (modern-day Seistan) as a stronghold of her worship. She is revered in the imperial capitals Susa, Persepolis and Ekbatana (modern-day Hamadan). Her worship is dominant in the old kingdoms of Elam



and Media, and in Asia Minor.

An Armenian tradition calls out to her “Great Lady Anahita, glory and life-giver of our nation, mother of sobriety, and benefactress of humanity”. (This might explain the special reverence of the Armenian-born queen Stateira, wife of Artaxerxes II, for Anahita.) The last ancient-built Anahita temples are reported in Armenia. In times of the Roman Empire, destructions of temples of Anahita are mentioned in Artaxata, the Armenian capital, and in places now known as Erzinjan and Mush.

Even in present-day Armenia, despite its Christian faith, Anahita still receives official honours. The central bank decided in 1997 to issue a commemorative gold coin with her image, stating that “Anahit has been considered the Mother Goddess of the Armenians”. The same image reappears on an Armenian postage stamp of 2007.

In the Persian empire that Alexander conquered, the official religion – though others were often tolerated– was the cult of Ahura Mazda. This worship of the ‘Lord of Wisdom’ had been reshaped, from the 13th century BC onwards, by the Baktrian reformer Zoroaster/Zarathustra and his followers.

Their sacred book, the *Avesta*, canonised in its oral version c. 650 BC, had reorganized the pantheon. In older Persian traditions, the Water

Goddess Anahita was the mother of the god of Victory, Mithra. Zoroaster turned Mithra into a prophesied Saviour. Anahita was then venerated as an immaculate virgin, and known as the “Mother of God.”

This worship was mainly experiential, lacking any real body of doctrine. There were many rituals and traditions, but little else until the Babylonian priests took over. They assimilated the Persian Anahita to their principal goddess Ishtar, who had acquired all the ancient powers of the Sumerian goddess Inanna.

However, only a generation before the arrival of Alexander the Great on this scene, king Artaxerxes II, Sisygambis’ father, had introduced a new calendar for holy days. He was very active with religious innovation, and substituted old Persian month-names with names derived from these Zoroastrian deities. Berosus, the Chaldean priest who wrote his *Babyloniaka* chronicle in the early third century BC, affirms that Artaxerxes II set up statues of Anahita in Susa and such far-flung places as Sardès, Damascus and Baktra.

That was a defiance of Zoroaster’s command that Godhead should be represented only by the flames of a sacred fire. This ‘transgression’ allowed his wayward son, the next king Artaxerxes III *Ochus*, to reject Anahita, and limit official worship to Ahura Mazda and Mithra only.

Ochus’ regime in time became the most sanguinary and hated in Ancient Persia’s history.

It can be conjectured that, after the bloody demise of Ochus' branch of the dynasty, the new queen-mother Sisygambis would have liked to see the cult of Anahita reinstated. A definite possibility, in view of Alexander's determination to return to the policy of religious freedom that had existed under Cyrus the Great.

One thing we know for sure: Anahita temples continued to function in the realm, and faith in Anahita remained strong among the population. Her worship was officially reinstated in Persia by the Zoroastrian dynasty of the Sassanids. The founder of that empire, Ardashir I (224-240 AD) has been identified as a son and grandson of chief priests at the principal Anahita temple of Istakhr, a site halfway between Persepolis and Pasargadai.

Many generations later, this temple was still the place where the last king of the dynasty celebrated his coronation ceremony, in 632 AD. Coins of the Sassanid era prove that the goddess Anahita was invoked at their kings' investiture. But after 651 AD, the muslim Arab conquerors of Persia presumably drove the cult underground.

Even so, the faithful would continue to appeal to the goddess Anahita for centuries to come. Recently, this author became acquainted on the Greek island of Crete with a Ionian family. The mother still remembered how, in her youth, her grandmother used to pray to the goddess Anahita. They had been brought up in a very

traditional village near Efesos.

Zoroaster writes his "Hymn to the Waters" (*Aban Yasht*) to explain how and why his male god Ahura Mazda has ordered him to honour the goddess Anahita. He describes her thus:

"A maid, fair of body, most strong, tall-formed, pure, nobly born of a glorious race. She wears square golden earrings on her ears bored, and a golden necklace around her beautiful neck. She girds her waist, so that her breasts may be well-shaped and tightly pressed. Upon her head Ardvi Sura Anahita carries a golden crown, with a hundred stars, with eight rays, and with fillets streaming down. She is clothed with the skins of thirty beavers; for the skin of the beaver that lives in water is the finest-coloured of all skins, and when worked at the right time it shines to the eye with full sheen of silver and gold.

She is possessed of as much Glory as the whole of the waters that run along the earth, and she runs powerfully. Ahura Mazda has made for her a chariot with four horses —the wind, the rain, the cloud, and the sleet— and thus ever upon the earth it is raining, snowing, hailing, and sleeting. And her armies are so many that they are numbered by

ninehundreds and thousands.”

The *Aban Yasht* enumerates Anahita’s powers as follows:

“Offer up a sacrifice, O Spitama Zarathustra! unto this spring of mine, Ardvi Sura Anahita, the health-giving, life-increasing and holy, who makes the seed of all males pure, who makes the womb of all females pure for bringing forth, who makes all females bring forth in safety, who puts milk into the breasts of all females in the right measure and the right quality! <...> And Ahura Mazda the merciful ordered thus, saying: “Come, O Ardvi Sura Anahita, come from those stars down to the earth made by Ahura, that the great lords may worship thee, the masters of the countries, and their sons. They will beg of thee: O good, most beneficent Ardvi Sura Anahita! I beg of thee the supremacy of Glory, and this favor: that I, fully blessed, may conquer large kingdoms, rich in horses, with high tributes, with snorting horses, sounding chariots, flashing swords, rich in aliments, with stores of food, with well-scented beds; that I may have at my wish the fullness of the good things of life and whatever makes a kingdom

thrive!

And the maids of barren womb, longing for a lord, will beg of thee a strong husband. Women, on the point of bringing forth, will beg of thee a good delivery. All this wilt thou grant unto them, as it lies in thy power, O Ardvi Sura Anahita!”

All these are, no doubt, the old powers of the Great Goddess. The *Aban Yasht* gives a long list of legendary Persian kings who have asked these favors of Anahita, and thrived – and of their enemies, who were refused Anahita’s favor, and crumbled. In his study of the *Darab-Nama*, professor William Hanaway notes: “Anahita was closely connected with royalty and the legitimacy of kingship.”

As the *Darab-nama* tells the story, Alexander has birthright to Persia’s throne because his mother is a woman called Anahid (!) descended from Feridun, and his father (king Darab/Darius) is a son of Ardashir/Artaxerxes. This attribution of double royal Persian descent is unique to the *Darab-Nama*.

Alexander conquers Persia from his half-brother Darab, who asks him to marry his daughter Buran-docht. In addition to being a

great warrior on the battlefield, Buran-docht also acts as Alexander's advisor and organiser. Her mother is called Aban-Docht, "Daughter of the Waters", and resides in Istakhr: clearly a reference to the Water Goddess Anahita, who had her main temple there.

Hanaway adds: "The logical ancestor of Buran-docht is Ardvi Sura Anahita. In Istakhr, Buran-docht takes Alexander's hand, seats him on the throne, and proclaims him king of Persia after his symbolic visit to her temple."

Possibly, queens of the Achaemenid dynasty derived part of their power from their connections with the Great Goddess/Anahita cult and its capacity to legitimize a new king. Atossa, with her surprising marriage to Darius after his illegal coup, and her vast power from then on, might be an example.

In the realm of Artaxerxes II, his queen Stateira –another descendant of the ancient Achaemenid line– also may have been such an initiate. (This could explain why the 'outsider' Parysatis, born from a Babylonian concubine, was so bent on killing her.) Artaxerxes II is the first historic example of a Persian High King owing his coronation at Pasargadai to a ceremony in an Anahita temple.

As Anahita is the goddess of all waters, for Persians water is an element not to be polluted - the message being that mortals should not defile

a goddess. She retains her virginity by bathing in pure water. The image, though not its real meaning, lives on long afterwards: Pausanias mentions an early Greek myth in which Hera, the later wife of Zeus, renewed her virginity by bathing in a magical fountain. Aelianus tells of a goddess who restored her virginity after each coitus by bathing in a fountain located between the upper Tigris and Euphrates, where some of the holy places of the Zoroastrians were. She must have been Anahita.

The prolific Greek writer Strabo states that “ritual prostitution” occurred in her temples in order to “purify the seed of males and the womb and milk of females.” This truncated interpretation has been cut off from the original meaning: that the enlightened experience of sexual unity between man and woman involves them in the universal love of the Great Goddess. The act of sexuality is meant to transport humans into a divine dimension.

Thus, the “ritual prostitutes” in Strabo’s description of priestesses in Anahita’s temples, in reality are virgins in the original sense of the word: intact in their inner being. They can welcome strangers with total self-assuredness, in a radiant way, for their task is to bring them in the presence of the love of the Great Goddess. In their act of sexuality, all dissonances of the human personality (like the opposition between feminine and masculine, or between the bodily



and the spiritual) are eliminated, in order to open their consciousness to the divine.

## ISIS, “QUEEN OF HEAVEN”

The Egyptian Isis will be the most enduring embodiment of the Great Mother. In fact, there still are Isis worshippers today. Already in the earliest Pyramid Texts (dating back to 3000 BC), that invoke her no less than 80 times, the distinctive icon above her head is the ‘throne’ hieroglyph. In other words, from the beginning she has reigned both in heaven and on earth. In **all** the land: unlike most other Egyptian gods, she did not begin as a local deity, but was revered everywhere.

Isis is closely related with kingship, as wife of Osiris; and with motherhood, as mother of Horus. The pharaohs proclaimed themselves the son of the goddess, and had this depicted on their tomb-carvings. There they are often seen drinking milk from the breast of their mother Isis. Inscriptions at Philae invoke her thus:

“Mighty one, foremost of the goddesses,  
Ruler in Heaven, Queen on earth...  
All the gods are under her command!  
She is the Lady of Heaven, Earth and the  
Netherworld,  
having brought them into existence...”

With her brother-husband Osiris and her son Horus, Isis forms the first Trinity in mankind's religious belief. She is "Great of Magic", this aspect being central to her many roles. It is through magic that Osiris was revived, Horus conceived and protected, and the deceased worshippers –whether royal or commoner–assisted in the afterlife. Most of the myths relating to Isis stress her magic ability.

One in particular, in which she learns the true name of Ra, highlights her position as the greatest of the gods in terms of magical knowledge and power. In this myth, Isis creates a snake which bites Ra: the stricken sun god is only healed of this poisoning when he reveals his true name to her, and thus further enhances her might. This is the *Snake-power* of the Goddess in its earliest form.

Isis was later assimilated with many other goddesses, having absorbed them as "Isis in all her manifestations." It is telling that the last pharaoh, queen Cleopatra VII, often used an Isis dress on state occasions. On coins, she identified herself as "Cleopatra-Isis-Afrodite", and she was thus deified in Egypt after her death.

Defying Roman customs, Caesar set up a golden image of Cleopatra besides the Venus Genetrix statue in the temple of his new Forum Iulium. One can only wonder what would have happened if Caesar had escaped from the assassins on the Idus of March, 44 BC, to begin a

long reign with Cleopatra at his side. Chances are that in the end the worship of Isis, and not Christianity, would have become the religion of the (Holy) Roman empire.

Her influence was amazingly widespread. There was a temple of Isis at Byblos, where the goddess was equated with the local form of Astarté from quite early times. Later, the worship of Isis extended over the Hellenistic world. Isis temples were built in Athens and other Greek cities, and subsequently in many parts of the Roman empire, as well as in Rome itself. The classical writer Apuleius left a detailed description of the initiations into her cult. Evidence of veneration of the goddess— carried afield by Roman legions— has been found as far apart as Iraq and England. In much of the ancient Mediterranean world, statuettes of a ‘combined’ goddess Isis-Afrodite-Venus became extremely popular.

No wonder that Isis was the pagan goddess who held out longest in a Christianised world. In the Land of Isis, as the Nubian territory south of Philae (=Pi-lak, “the island at the end” of the first cataract at Assuan) was known for ages, priestesses and queens continued to be powerful even in Christian times.

In the Meroitic Period (593 BC - 350 AD), women held exceptionally high positions, as the Romans discovered the hard way. Their writer

Pliny the Elder described the splendid capital Meroé down to details that have been confirmed by archeological excavations. He also must have had detailed knowledge of the political lay of the land, for he wrote: “The sovereigns of the country carry the title of Candace, a name that has been passed from queen to queen for many years.”

In fact, the Kandake or Candace is a Roman transcription of the meroitic title *Kentake* meaning ‘queen-mother’. For many centuries, she held the highest office in the Nubian state, wielding her power through a double option. She chose the future king from among her sons, and also chose the woman who was to be his wife and future *Kentake*. Then, for good measure, she also adopted her officially as her own daughter.

Roman chronicles register four especially awe-inspiring queen mothers in Meroitic Nubia: Nawidemak, Amanirenas, Amanishakhete and Amanitarakide, whose time in office coincided with the first Caesars from Julius to Nero. The most forceful of them was the one-eyed *Kentake* Amanirenas, a contemporary of Cleopatra VII.

When the Roman legions began to occupy Egypt after Augustus’ triumph over Cleopatra, they thought they also could take over Nubia. But Amanirenas set herself at the head of her army and threw the Roman garrisons out of their frontier forts at Philae and the Elephantine Island. As a warning –so Strabo tells us– she pulled down the statues of Augustus that had

been erected there.

The Roman governor Petronius answered with a punishing raid on the ancient Nubian capital of Napata, which he destroyed in 24 BC. But no sooner had Petronius and his legions turned their back, Amanirenas in person led her army in attack again, this time to demolish Assuan. A military standoff ensued: neither the Romans nor the Nubians could force their enemy to surrender.

In the end, Rome preferred to negotiate a settlement. The ambassadors of the *Kentaké* and Augustus came together on the island of Samos in 20 BC. There, they signed a peace and trade treaty that remained in force for centuries. One of its clauses gave the Meroites continued access to the Isis temples on Philae.

When Augustus took over Egypt, he was sufficiently well advised about the importance of the cult to associate himself with Isis. He had the outer walls of Philae decorated with carvings showing himself making sacrifices to the goddess. On these walls, he hailed her as “Sovereign of Heaven, Lady of Philae, giver of Life.” But it was a stick-and-carrot act: at an additional temple he had built on the island, he erected a stele emphasizing how he had crushed a massive revolt in Egypt in 29 BC, following the suicide of Cleopatra VII. At the nearby Debod temple, also (re)dedicated to Isis, Augustus had himself

depicted as “Kaisaros, acclaimed by all, Lord of the force that submits his enemies.”

Later Roman emperors funded lavish reconstructions at the Isis temples of Philae. The most prominent were Trajan, around 105 AD, and Hadrian shortly after him. However, the Romans suffered a serious setback in 450 AD, when Nubian warriors reoccupied Philae and Assuan. A new peace agreement was then signed, allowing the Nubian tribes to celebrate festivals of Isis in the Philae temples.

Occasionally they also could borrow the sacred statue of the Goddess for their processions through the Land of Isis. Thus Philae continued in full use as a pagan temple, even under intolerant Christian emperors who had closed down all other Egyptian cults.

Only after a Nubian king, Silko –converted to Christianity in 543 AD–, had crushed his pagan Nubian rivals, the curtain fell. Emperor Justinian finally ordered a clampdown on Philae in 552 AD. The Isis priesthood was chased away, and a crudely built Christian church set up within the main Isis temple.

Even so, as stated in *Ancient Goddesses*, “the legacy of Isis survived the collapse of Egyptian civilisation, and the social transformations that codified gender inequalities in law and religion. The return of the Goddess at a time when women are claiming equal opportunities underscores the potency of this icon. <...>

The laments of Isis over the violent death of Osiris, and the torments of evil and injustice, were in essence an outcry against the discontent of 'civilisation': power leading to rivalry and violence, competition, conflict and potentially, chaos. Isis reasserts love and continuity, and aids in the birth of right and justice."

## WOMEN IN ANCIENT PERSIAN SOCIETY

The epic of the Persian empire begins when Cyrus the Great takes over the throne of the Medes from his grandfather Astyages in 559 BC. And more precisely, if we can believe Xenofon, at the instant when Astyages' daughter Amytis crowns Cyrus as the King of Kings – a ritual the Persians will never forget.

This Median princess receives great public honors from Cyrus, who first proclaims her his 'mother' and then (once her husband has been executed) his 'wife'. Cyrus has good reasons to homage Amytis. It is her official approval for his takeover of the empire, what puts an end to the armed resistance of important parts of the realm against him. But Amytis' titles of "mother" and "wife" are just that: nominal titles, given to her by Cyrus for political reasons only.

His real wife, the queen who stands at his side for most of his extraordinary career of conquests, is Kassandane: a Persian like him. She too



descends from the Achaemenid lineage that dominates the original Persian heartland around Pasargadai. She bears him his heir Cambyses, and his famously powerful daughter Atossa. When Kassandane dies on the 29th of March, 539 BC, the whole empire plunges into public mourning.

Writers of those days tell us that Cyrus bitterly lamented the loss of his queen. He missed her dearly: not only as his wife, but also as his private counsellor. It would take another eight years for him to become politically active again. No one doubted that Persian royal women, during the centuries of the Achaemenid dynasty, were a real power behind the throne.

And before that, older traditions in Mesopotamia said, of the throne. In 810 BC Sammur-Amat, the great Assyrian queen whom legend would call Semiramis, built the first vast waterworks that secured the power and riches of Babylon. This queen, later chronicles held, proved herself highly capable both in domestic and foreign policy. Nearly a thousand years afterwards Arrian still remembered her example, and grudgingly conceded: "It had been a custom in Asia, ever since the time of Semiramis, even for women to rule men!"

All evidence confirms that the women of ancient Persia had an assigned and honourable place in society. It is interesting to note that the ordinances of Zoroaster specifically assure the female has been created equal in rank with the

male. That conviction must have existed already before the time of this religious reformer. Zoroaster was much too respectful of the habits and prejudices of his countrymen to have made any serious alteration in such a basic belief.

After Kassandane, an even more powerful woman appeared on the scene: her daughter Atossa. The historian Herodotos assures that she was the co-ruler of the empire during two generations. First as the principal wife of three 'Kings of Kings' in rapid succession: her brothers Cambyses and Bardiya, plus her distant cousin Darius – and then as queen mother in the reign of Xerxes. Also, she was a well educated intellectual. The invention of a specific alphabet for Old Persian, adapted from the Aramaic one and imposed by royal decree for all state use, was credited to her.

She had supreme authority over the royal servants, which did not simply mean she directed palace affairs. Atossa ruled over the civil bureaucracy, and had a say in military appointments. She wielded such power that Herodotos did not hesitate to accuse her of the decision of the first Persian invasion of Greece. To get the information needed to begin a war, he said, she convinced her husband Darius to launch a military mission to spy out the Greek coast. And as a guide for this intelligence unit, Atossa appointed a man who knew those faraway

regions well: the Greek court doctor Demokedes.

But then Herodotos, who would never despise a saucy story, whatever its historical merits, went on to reveal the ‘true’ reasons behind the mission that took place in 519 BC. Atossa had a secret debt to Demokedes, he wrote. She had developed an abscess on her breast, which for shame she had tried to conceal; but it spread, and she became so ill she had to confide in the doctor. He cured her discreetly, in exchange for the promise that she would get him an appointment on a mission to Greece. Not because he liked to be a spy, but in reality because he wanted to flee from his Persian masters, and used Atossa’s power to enable his escape to his native home.

Herodotos does not clarify whether Atossa was deceived by Demokedes, or counted on his intention to desert. For the Greeks’ refusal to give him up, was later construed as the insult that permitted the Persians to declare war. But it is made abundantly clear that Atossa, both as queen in Darius’ reign and as queen-mother under the next High King, had the capacity and determination to shape Persia’s international and domestic policy. (Some experts question such statements, because Atossa does not appear on the Persian archive registers that have been translated so far. But that may still happen, and in the meantime Herodotos merits the benefit of the doubt.)

Her name, Atossa, which she wrote as

“Hutaosâ”, has a religious connotation. Possibly it was also her religious status what made it so valuable for the High Kings Cambyses II, Bardiya and Darius I to take her for principal wife. Cambyses married her when he was the crown prince. For Bardiya, it was the first *royal* act of his short-lived rebellion in 522 BC against Cambyses.

Later that year Darius followed suit, after having killed Bardiya saying that he was an impostor – a false claim that Atossa publicly upheld, thereby legitimising Darius’ coup. That pact of silence goes a long way to explain her sway over Darius. Saying that “she had all the power,” Herodotos affirms she was able to intrigue for her son Xerxes to become Darius’ successor instead of his eldest son, born from another wife.

Darius I had taken at least six wives; mostly, for political reasons. This way, he could bind to his cause, and keep out of reach for others, the dynastic legitimacy and powerful status these women had by themselves. Both Atossa and his later wife Irtashduna were daughters of Cyrus the Great; and Parmys, born some 20 years after Atossa, was a granddaughter of Cyrus. Possibly, Darius married these younger wives after Atossa’s death, so they would again bring to his side their legitimacy of royal birthright, whereas his own was a fabrication.

And if Atossa could be called famous,

Irtashduna was no less widely known in the empire. The Persepolis Archives register her active management decisions concerning royal estates and factories all over the country. Herodotos (who calls her Artystone) assures she was by far the favourite wife: "Darius even ordered a statue of hammered gold made of her!" For their celebrations, Irtashduna kept a palace in the snowy mountains of the Persian heartland abundantly supplied with food and drink. 1940 litres of wine and 200 sheep were delivered there at New Year's Eve of 503 BC.

After Atossa's death, Persia still felt her iron hand for a long time. Amastris, whom she had selected to be Xerxes' wife, continued her policies, and was equally influential as queen-mother of the first Artaxerxes. Or rather we should say that, from the early days of the empire, the **office** of queen-mother remained powerful.

A curious detail: Darius' mother does not appear on his inscriptions and public proclamations. The reason for this omission is that his parents were only indirectly related to Cyrus the Great, so in reality they had not transmitted to Darius the throne rights he claimed to have. And yet Irdabama shines in the archives with all the (economic) powers of a queen-mother, broader even than those of the favourite wife Irtashduna.

As the Persepolis tablets show, Irdabama regularly orders greater amounts of foodstuffs to be delivered at the palace from her own – more numerous– storehouses, than Irtashduna. Also, Irdabama has more personnel working at her various factories. On top, she can direct the royal treasury to make payments in silver, something which is not attested for any of Darius' wives.

One should keep in mind that royal women in Persia had their independent power base, because they owned and managed vast estates. The archives mention residences, storehouses and factories of Irdabama in at least ten different localities of the realm, besides the imperial capitals of Susa and Persepolis. One village in conquered Egypt, Anthylla, was reserved solely to provide shoes for the Persian queens. Parysatis, wife of Darius II, owned whole belts of villages in Babylonia and Syria to keep her larders and treasury well stocked. These were extensive properties, “a full day's march in width.”

But queens and princesses not only held economic force: a High King could just as well regale a royal lady with “an army under her sole command.” According to Herodotos, this was “a thoroughly Persian gift.” As queen mother in the reign of Artaxerxes II, Parysatis demonstrated her independence also in military affairs. She levied an army in her own Syrian estates for her other son, Cyrus the Younger, when he tried to topple his brother from the throne.

Parysatis had willingly contributed to that civil war. When Artaxerxes II publicly announced his decision to eliminate Cyrus from all dynastic power, Parysatis made him withdraw his own decree, and Cyrus was reinstated as viceroy over Asia Minor. Soon after, he gathered an army of Greek mercenaries, added them to the forces his mother had provided, and marched against his brother.

(Describing this campaign, in which he took part himself as a mercenary officer, Xenophon gives another example of independent action by royal wives in the Persian empire. He states that queen Epyaxa of Kilikia supported Cyrus' army out of her own purse — in spite of the opposite policies of her husband. Regardless of her marriage with the king, Epyaxa was "intimate" with Cyrus, Xenophon remarks in his typically prude language.)

Only Cyrus' death, at the battle of Cunaxa, saved the High King. But Artaxerxes II did not put an end to the abuses of his mother until she poisoned his wife Stateira for having opposed her political intrigues. Even then, Parysatis was only banished to her vast possessions around Babylon.

Artaxerxes II was widely known for his overly generous and affectionate character. For example, he had asked his wife Stateira to withdraw the curtains of her carriage when she went into town, so that people could speak to her freely on the road. With such firsthand

information, he said, she would counsel him even better on the affairs of his subjects.

## EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT

Plutarch, citing Ktesias the doctor, gives a moving account of those events. These are some key paragraphs, in the translation by John Dryden:

“Artaxerxes was at first called Arsicas [Arshú, in Old Persian]; this is what Ktesias said, who would not be ignorant of the name of the king with whom he lived as his physician, attending upon himself, his wife, his mother, and his children.

Artaxerxes was gentler than his brother, Cyrus the Younger, in everything. He married a beautiful and virtuous wife [Stateira], at the desire of his parents, but kept her as expressly against their wishes. For king Darius II, having put her brother to death, was purposing likewise to destroy her. But Arsicas, throwing himself at his mother’s feet, by many tears, at last, with much ado, persuaded her that they should neither put her to death nor divorce her from him.

<...>

Cyrus was the favourite of his mother Parysatis, and he had full hopes that by her means he was to be declared the successor to the kingdom. For Parysatis had the specious plea in



his behalf with Darius, that she had borne him Arsicas when he was a subject, but Cyrus, when a king. Even so, after Darius the eldest son, Arsicas, was proclaimed king, his name being changed into Artaxerxes. Cyrus remained satrap of Lydia, and commander in the Maritime Provinces.

<...>

In the beginning of his reign, Arsicas did seem to emulate the gentleness of the first Artaxerxes, being very accessible in his person, and liberal to a fault in the distribution of honours and favours. Even in his punishments, no contumely or vindictive pleasure could be seen; and those who offered him presents were as much pleased with his manner of accepting, as were those who received gifts from him with his graciousness and amiability in giving them.

Once, when some were offering him one thing, some another, as he was on a progress, a certain poor labourer, having got nothing at hand to bring him, ran to the river side, and, taking up water in his hands, offered it to him; with which Artaxerxes was so well pleased that he sent him a goblet of gold and a thousand darics.

And whereas none usually sat down to eat with the King besides his mother and his wedded wife, the former being placed above, the other below him, Artaxerxes invited also to his table his two younger brothers, Ostanes and Oxathres. But what was the most popular thing of all among the Persians was the sight of his wife

Stateira's chariot, which always appeared with its curtains down, allowing her countrywomen to salute and approach her, which made the queen a great favourite with the people.

<....>

Cyrus marched against the king, having under his conduct a numerous host of barbarians, and but little less than thirteen thousand stipendiary Grecians; alleging first one cause, then another, for his expedition. Thereupon, the court was all in an uproar and tumult, the queen mother Parysatis bearing almost the whole blame of the enterprise, and her retainers being suspected and accused.

Above all, Stateira angered her by bewailing the war and passionately demanding where were now the pledges and the intercession which saved the life of him that conspired against his brother – “to the end,” she said, “that he might plunge us all into war and trouble.” For which words Parysatis hating Stateira, and being naturally implacable and savage in her anger and revenge, consulted how she might destroy her.

<....>

Parysatis and Stateira had begun again to visit each other again, and to eat together. But though they had thus far relaxed their former habits of jealousy and variance, still, out of fear and as a matter of caution, they always ate of the same dishes and of the same parts of them.

Now there is a small Persian bird, in the

inside of which no excrement is found, only a mass of fat, so that they suppose the little creature lives upon air and dew. It is called rhyntaces. Ktesias affirms that Parysatis, cutting a bird of this kind into two pieces with a knife one side of which had been smeared with the drug, the other side being clear of it, ate the untouched and wholesome part herself, and gave Stateira that which was thus infected.

Stateira, dying with dreadful agonies and convulsions, was herself sensible of what had happened to her, and aroused in the king's mind suspicion of his mother, whose savage and implacable temper he knew. And therefore proceeding instantly to an inquest, he seized upon his mother's domestic servants and Gigis was adjudged to death. But to his mother, Artaxerxes neither said nor did any other hurt, save that he banished and confined her, not much against her will, to Babylon, protesting that while she lived he would not come near that city. Such was the condition of the king's affairs in his own house.

<....>

Artaxerxes expired, after a life of ninety-four years, and a reign of sixty-two. And then he seemed a moderate and gracious governor, more especially as compared to his son *Ochus*, who outdid all his predecessors in bloodthirstiness and cruelty."

## ACTIVE WOMEN OF INDEPENDENT STATUS

Modern studies, like that of professor J. Wiesehöfer –published in 2001 in New York–, describe Persian women as “positively active, enterprising and resolute”; in the eyes of Greeks, “both attractive and dangerous.” Greek tales of Persian women living in seclusion have been proven wrong by the evidence in the clay tablets found at Persepolis, he states.

Wiesehöfer points out that the archive tablets routinely register travel rations of wine, beer and grain issued to royal women for extensive journeys throughout the empire on their own behalf. And just as regularly, the royal stores provide rations to commoner women if they are on the road for official business. For example, one tablet (PF 1546) registers a journey by a woman employee from Susa, Mirzapizaka, who has to carry a letter to Persepolis.

Professor Wiesehöfer’s criticism on Greek ‘tales’ can be applied more broadly. In the classical literature, Persian queens and princesses were invariably depicted as a negative power behind the throne. Until recently, Western scholars failed to take into account the fact that, for those Greek writers, Persia was the evil Empire that came out of the East to attack them. Their writings therefore contain much propaganda. Their bias has influenced academic opinion for centuries, also because few other

sources were available to offer different information.

Thus queen Parysatis was described profusely as a vengeful, pathologically sadistic woman. The wife of Xerxes, Amastris, continued to be depicted as “a licentious and notoriously cruel woman, who exercised a baneful influence at court.” Even worse was the general academic opinion of Atossa, wife of Darius I. She was said to be “more bloodthirsty than any Persian king has ever been, with the exception of Artaxerxes III *Ochus*.” But then of course she had to be very bad, since Herodotos had proclaimed her to be the original culprit of Persia’s aggressions against Greece!

In her thorough study based on Mesopotamian archive sources, Dr. Maria Brosius states:

“All these stories share a consistent plot. The women’s actions were determined to gain more power. The prevailing picture is that of a royal court in which the king’s power is repeatedly undermined by women. Atossa the Elder incited Darius I to attack Greece. Queen mother Parysatis supported Cyrus the Younger in his revolt against his brother and king, Atossa the Younger, daughter of Artaxerxes II, was willing to support her half-brother Ochus against the king. His other son, Darius, was provoked into rebellion by the

concubine Aspasia. It seems that royal women and revolt against the king are irrevocably intertwined with each other.

<...>

The women of the Achaemenid court were used by 5th and 4th century Greek writers to add sensationalism to their stories. We ought to be very cautious in accepting the image in which women of the Persian court are depicted.”

A first and failed opportunity for correction had been the discovery of Neo-Babylonian texts from the ‘Murashu’ archive in Nippur. It also recorded the economic activities of royal women in Babylon. Professor Bruno Meissner, in 1904, and Professor Hüsing, in 1933, were able to deduce from these texts that Persian queens privately controlled vast estates with a complete governing apparatus, and even appointed their own judges. However, this evidence was not pursued to the logical next step of reviewing the political and social status of royal ladies.

A new opportunity for a reappraisal of Persian women opened up with the publication, around 1970, of numerous tablet texts from Persepolis. In these ‘Fortification Texts’, Dr Maria Brosius identifies a particular category of women officials who carry the title of *Arashara*.

Tablet PF 1790 registers an order from the king’s treasurer for the distribution of sheep to

royal personnel. Among the recipients, he specifically mentions four *Arashara* by name: Dakma, Harbakka, Matmaba and Sadukka. Meat rations are rare, so the issuing of 4 sheep to each of these women supervisors seems to be an extraordinary payment. Also the fact that they are known by their personal name to the Royal Treasurer, confirms the weighty status they enjoyed within the economic organisation of the Persian empire.

As more and more tablets from the archive were translated, it became noteworthy that an exceptionally high number of *Arashara* worked at the service of Irdabama, the queen-mother of Darius the Great. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the fact that such women were involved both in the economic management of the estates and their governance by (male and female) officials. The independent power enjoyed by these royal ladies is evident from their use of personal seals on the tablets, and their ability to give orders to their officials in the form of letters. They clearly had at their disposal administrative facilities similar to those available to the king.

Persian women –of the royal house, but commoners too– must have had full control over their properties, because they could lease land in return for rent. Babylon has a case registered in 486 BC in which Artim, a wet nurse of a royal daughter, receives a payment as rent for a field.

“We have to assume that land ownership by women was far more widespread than, until now, it was considered to be,” Dr Maria Brosius states.

In short, the archives contain evident proof that, also outside the ruling class, the average Persian woman was much more respected than her contemporary Greek counterpart. Female workers could be exceptionally well paid: skilled women received wages far above those of the average man. The tablets show women in a wide range of occupations in Persepolis: woodworkers and stone-workers, artisans, wine makers, furniture makers, treasury clerks, storekeepers, carriers, grain handlers. Most trades were open to women as well as to men. Persepolis had its female staff of managers, directing work units (made up mostly, but not exclusively, of women) employed by the imperial family.

At the court itself, the status of royal women – sustained by both economic and political power – went far beyond the comprehension of contemporary Greek authors. Clearly the most eminent of them all was the status of the queen-mother. As a case in point, Dr Maria Brosius cites instances in which the king’s mother had access to the throne when no one else was allowed to approach; and the many occasions in which she was present at the king’s audiences. This brings her to the conclusion that “the Queen Mother held the most important position at the Persian court.”



Ever since Kassandane, it was an established fact that Persian queens were much more than consorts, or than queen-mothers supposedly ruling a palace harem. They had a huge influence in decisions about whom to promote, whom to punish, whom to execute or whose life to spare. Sisygambis, queen-mother of Darius III, also wielded such power, even after her son had been replaced on the throne by Alexander the Great. He pointedly upheld her status as the most prominent woman in the empire, and treated her as if she were his own mother.

The fall of the Achaemenid empire not only had political consequences, but also meant a social earthquake in the principal model of the Ancient World. The result was an irreparable deterioration of the position of women in public and social life. Had Alexander the Great not beaten Darius III, or more precisely, had his successors not put an end to his policy of maintaining Persian traditions and customs, no doubt women throughout ancient and modern social history would have been far better off.

In a few instances, Hellenistic empires that appear after the fusion of Greek and Mesopotamian culture still give us examples of powerful women leading the way. The most famous of them all, queen/pharaoh Cleopatra VII of Ptolemaic Egypt, is a brilliant successor to Sammur-Amat, Kassandane, Atossa and

Sisygambis.

## EARLY HISTORY OF KARIA, AND QUEEN ADA

The Karians lived in the southwestern region of Asia Minor below the river Meander. The oldest registered remnant of their civilisation has been uncovered on the banks of an affluent of the Meander: a settlement found on the acropolis of latter-day Aphrodisias (35 kms west of Pammukale, Turkey) and dated to 5800 BC. Already then it held a sanctuary of the Mother Goddess.

It became an advanced civilisation soon. Metalwork was introduced to Greece in the 3rd millennium BC by these peoples migrating to Crete and other islands, during the so-called 'Western Anatolian Migrations'. This was also evidenced by ceramic and philological finds related to the cult of the Mother Goddess. They feature the bull and the double-headed axe *Labrys*, that were to figure so prominently in the Minoan civilisation.

The historian Thucydides affirms that the Karians did not pay taxes to king Minos of Crete, but served him with warships and soldiers. This alliance with Crete is confirmed by the fact that Karia's first historic queen, Artemisia, was the daughter of a Cretan woman. Karia sustained its maritime relation with Crete over the centuries: today the Cretan capital and main port, Iraklion, still has a coastal suburb that bears the Karian name Halikarnassós.

Homer says that the Karians spoke their own language ("rough, and other than Greek"). It had a particular alphabet, looking similar to Linear A on Crete. The Greek author Eusebios states that the Karians formed a maritime kingdom c. 900 BC. Ancient Egyptian sources describe their mercenaries who went to Egypt as "bronze men that came from the sea".

Karians were sailors and soldiers for Minos, for local kings in Fenicia, for the Persian navy since Cyrus the Great, and for the Egyptian pharaohs Psammetikos I and II. Of the 300-odd extant inscriptions in Karian, about 200 have been located in Egypt on graves of Karian mercenaries, mostly dating from the 6th century BC. The experts think that was a period when Karia 'exported' sailors and soldiers.

Despite their early Hellenisation, the Karians also kept in use their own language (evolved around 1000 BC from Hittite/Luwian), especially for religious ends, until the 1st century BC. The

Great Goddess of the Luwians, *Lada* –meaning “woman”–, was a fertility deity represented with multiple breasts, as seen on the famous statue of the ‘Artemis of Efesos’. She was Hellenised under the names of Artemis and Afrodite, but also assimilated to Persian rites under the name of Anahita.

Both Strabo and Pausanias state that when the Greeks migrated into Efesos, they found Karians there living around a temple of the Mother Goddess. Later, the Karians adopted the Greek male gods too, but their ‘Zeus Karios’ maintained the symbols of the Great Goddess, carrying the Labrys and shown on statues and steles as having female breasts. (Room 81 of the British Museum exhibits a stele that represents king Hidrieus and queen Ada flanking the god, who is depicted with six breasts and carrying a Labrys on his shoulder.)

Since at least 700 BC, Karia’s old capital Mylasa kept a golden Labrys as a sacred treasure at the ‘Zeus Labraunda’ temple. All over Karia, the double-headed axe is found on temples and official buildings as the national icon.

Living at the edge of the Achaemenid Empire, the Karians variously battled with and against the Persians. They opposed the western advance of the Persian armies fiercely – or rather, desperately. First in 540 BC, and then again during the Ionian uprising of 500-494 BC. There,

on the banks of the Marsyas, they lost a whole army of 10,000 men, massacred by an expeditionary force led by general Daurises, a son-in-law of Darius the Great. But still they fought on, and ambushed Daurises when he marched on their capital. They killed him with all his men. Only after their total disaster in a sea battle near Miletos in 494 BC, they finally surrendered.

And thus High King Xerxes could order Karia to send ships for his invasion of Greece in 480 BC. The Karian queen Artemisia became one of his admirals. She commanded not only Karia's 60 warships, but also those from Kos, Nisyra and Calydna. At the battle of Salamis she was the only naval commander who broke through the Athenian line. Such was her daring that Xerxes exclaimed: "Today, my men fought like women, and my women like men!" The Athenians put a price on her head of 10,000 drachma, "as she recalled the Amazon queen who had invaded Attika centuries ago."

Her townsman Herodotos, then only a child, would later write: "Artemisia was the daughter of Lygdamis, a tyrant of Halikarnassos; on her mother's side she was Cretan. At the death of her husband the sovereign power had passed into her hands, and she sailed with the fleet in spite of the fact that she had a grown-up son and there was consequently no necessity for her to do so. Her own spirit of adventure and manly courage were

her only incentives. Not one of the allied commanders gave Xerxes sounder advice than she did.”

Xerxes rewarded her with the extraordinary honour of a ‘familiar’ relation with the imperial dynasty: he asked her to oversee the education of some of his sons. But that was for another reason. Her practical counsel and her gallant deeds at Salamis only made her one among many commanders getting the king’s attention through military prowess. But Artemisia’s sharp intelligence and keen eye enabled her to do him a personal service. Thanks to the Karian queen, Xerxes could give his eldest brother an honorable burial.

It is a significant detail, usually overlooked because it appears only as a side remark in a text centered on other leading characters. The top commander of all Persian naval forces at Salamis was “Ariamenes, a brave man and by far the best and most honest of Xerxes’ brothers”, so Plutarch tells us in *Themistokles*, 14. Ariamenes in person led the attack on the ships of Themistokles; but in the fight he was hit by a spear and, dying, fell overboard. “As his body was drifting here and there among the wreckage, Artemisia recognised it and recovered it for Xerxes”.

This was important to the Persian king, because Ariamenes had played a major role in his accession to the throne. As Plutarch notes (*Apoplith.*, 173), Ariamenes –being the eldest of

all the brothers– could have claimed the crown. But when the court acknowledged Xerxes, Ariamenes “immediately saluted him as king, acted as an obedient subject, and was much honoured by Xerxes”.

So the comfort of being able to give his elder brother a dignified burial –after the distress of believing him disappeared in action– surely was the key factor in the king’s personal gratitude to Artemisia. And not only Xerxes would be thankful to her, for Ariamenes’ sake. Many other front-ranking members of the imperial dynasty must have shared his appreciation for the Karian queen.

However, Xerxes’ invasion of the Greek mainland ended in a fiasco, and Persia lost the coast of Asia Minor too. Karia had to submit as a vassal to the Athenians until Sparta, backed by Persian gold, destroyed their power.

Shortly afterwards, High King Artaxerxes II recovers control over Ionia. He has a curious relationship with Karia. Around 395 BC, he separates Karia from the Sardès satrapy, under its own royal dynasty. Though styled ‘satraps’, these kings and queens succeed in maintaining a high degree of independence. Their ‘Hekatomnid’ dynasty must have had a very special relationship with the local Mother Goddess cult: the name of their founder, in vernacular *He-kata-wa-umna*, means “The Servant of the Temple of the Great



Goddess.”

The historian Theopompos states that Hekatomnos was appointed to be the commander of a Persian fleet when Artaxerxes II planned to invade Cyprus. However, he not only failed to fulfil these orders, but secretly provided the Cypriots with money to raise mercenary troops against the Persians when another satrap, Tiribazos, finally attacked the island in 386 BC.

Even so, Hekatomnos was allowed to stay on the throne and leave his kingdom in 377 BC to his son Maussolo, who displaced its capital from inland Mylasa to Halikarnassos on the coast. He was an energetic king, enhancing Karia's naval power, building fortifications and initiating splendid public works like the open-air theater at Halikarnassos. With its 13,000 seats it had room to spare for the whole population of the city! But his policies came at the cost of crushing taxation on his people. He even invented a tax on “the luxury of wearing long hair below the shoulders”.

During the ‘Great Satraps’ Revolt’ of 366-360 BC, Maussolo fought both against and with various rebel satrapies. The others were finally brought to heel by Persia, but Karia obtained *de facto* independence. At his death in 353 BC he was succeeded by his wife Artemisia II, who ruled for another two years. She is best known for having completed the construction of a 49 metres high tomb for her husband in Halikarnassos: such a marvel of art and

architecture that it was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Its name, Mausoleum, is still universally used for such monuments.

Less well known is the fact that this Artemisia fully deserved to share the name and fame of her predecessor, the admiral-queen. When an invasion fleet from Rhodes appeared before Halikarnassos, Artemisia II intelligently hid her own warships. After the Rhodians had disembarked, she slipped out of her secret harbour to fall on their undermanned fleet from behind, killing all invaders. Then she sailed to Rhodes on the surrendered ships, with her own ones towed behind as if they were prizes. The deluded Rhodians allowed them unopposed into their harbour, and the Karians conquered the whole island.

Thanks to the expansion of the realm under Maussolo and Artemisia II, the next rulers of Karia –Hidrieus and Ada I, also children of Hekatomnos– were considered “the most powerful princes of Western Asia”, as Theopompos states. In 346 BC Karia showed off its naval strength. The new High King in Susa, Artaxerxes *Ochus*, marshalled armies and navies for the recovery of his rebellious provinces on the western seaboard. Hidrieus then offered him a powerful force of 40 triremes reinforced with 8,000 mercenaries. The reconquest of Egypt, Fenicia and Cyprus enabled Ochus also to reduce

his many rebellious vassals in Asia Minor.

This was accomplished by the mercenary Greek generals Mentor and his brother Memnon, whose manoeuvres steadily diminished the power of the Karian dynasty. They encouraged Hidrieus' younger brother Pixodaro to stage a palace coup c. 340 BC against queen Ada. He was then recognised as 'satrap', though in reality he never came to control the whole of Karia.

He first obeyed Persian orders to oppose Philip II of Makedon by aiding a rebellion of Perinthos, a harbor city controlling grain transports through the Bosphorus. But shortly before his death in 335 BC he proposed an alliance to Philip, offering him the hand of his daughter for his son. When those negotiations failed, he married her off to the Persian envoy Orontobates, who succeeded him as satrap.

Queen Ada I, born c. 380 BC, had reigned from 351 BC as joint ruler with Hidrieus and after his death in 344 BC, as widow queen until Pixodaro expelled her from Halikarnassos. Even so, from her castle at Alinda she regained control over part of the Karian countryside, and found partisans in the cities for her fight against Orontobates.

The situation changed dramatically when Alexander appeared with his army, and reinstated her as queen in 334. General Memnon had turned Halikarnassos into the focal point of Persian resistance against the Makedonian

onslaught. After his sudden death, Orontobates fled and Alexander's army conquered the whole of Karia. By Alexander's order, it was made independent of the Sardès governorate, and ruled by Ada. She exercised all administrative and political powers as queen – and as queen mother, since Alexander acceded to her wish to adopt him as her son.

Ada's proposal to be Alexander's 'mother' was less of an unexpected inspiration than it may seem. Three years before, Alexander had been on the point of becoming her close relative. Her niece Ada II had been offered, to seal a proposed alliance, as wife for the crown prince of Makedon. Those negotiations with king Philip, and their breakdown because of an intervention by Alexander, certainly got Ada's full attention.

If Pixodaro could have obtained the backing of Philip's war-hardened army, Ada's fight against her brother would have become really desperate. So she gathered all the information she could on the affair, which in turn made her aware of Alexander's capacities. She must have liked his personality then already. A feeling that now, in a quite natural way, led to her offer to adopt him.

Alexander clearly showed his determination to protect his new 'mother': to back up her government he left behind a strong unit of 3200 soldiers, in spite of his own manpower shortage. But it turned out that her rule did not need much

in the way of military backing. (These troops were employed in coastal operations against the Persian navy, until that threat had been neutralised, and then joined Alexander in time for the Issos battle.)

In her second period as queen, Ada put to her credit another ten years of prosperity and peace for Karians and foreign residents alike. For instance, she authorised a honorary citizenship of Karia for two Persians who had come to serve as priests of Anahita-Afrodite. Their Persian credentials were so solid that their office passed on to their descendants for another three generations.

But notwithstanding the peaceful coexistence between inhabitants of various Karian, Greek and Persian descent, the kingdom was immediately drawn into the Successor Wars after Alexander's death. As part of his first appointments of satraps, Perdikkas ordered Asander, a relative of Antigonos *One-Eye*, to take over Karia. Soon, the region became a battlefield in the conflict between Perdikkas and Antigonos: Asander sided with his relative, and Eumenes attacked him with part of Perdikkas' troops.

If queen Ada had still been alive and reigning when Asander arrived in Halikarnassos, the classical sources could not fail to notice such an encroachment upon Alexander's adoptive mother; but that is not mentioned anywhere. Therefore, most scholars place Ada's death, ascribed to old

age, in the immediate vicinity of those of Alexander and Sisygambis.

This would have allowed Asander to take over Karia without much complication from a caretaker governor left behind by Ada. Probably he was Filoxenos, the financial administrator of the Sardès satrapy who, through his broad powers, had become one of the most influential men in Asia Minor. Early 323 he had gone to Babylon at the head of a troop of Karian reinforcements sent to Alexander. It can be inferred he then already was the acting governor in Karia for a very ill queen Ada.



More than 2300 years later, in 1989, a miraculously untouched burial chamber was discovered on the grounds of the old Royal Necropolis of Halikarnassos, near the Mylasa Gate. The tomb revealed a sarcophagus containing the skeleton of a woman adorned with rich jewellery, including a golden diadem in the form of myrtle leaves, flowers, and berries. The form and content of the burial chamber, dated after 360 BC, left no doubt the royal lady pertained to the Hekatomnid dynasty.

The anthropological analysis by specialists of the University of Manchester established that this woman, who had had at least two childbirths, was slightly over 40 years of age when she died

of sudden illness after a healthy life — she was found with all her 32 teeth intact. Her facial reconstruction by university experts revealed a countenance highly similar to the bust of queen Ada I found at the Athene Polias temple in nearby Priene. They must have been close relatives. In view of her age at death, she might very well be queen Ada's niece and namesake.

Today the museum in the Bodrum Castle, an impressive crusader fortress built on the site of Halikarnassos' royal stronghold, proudly exhibits 'the Princess of Karia'. Her statue, adorned with all her jewels, stands in the Axe Tower — so called for the double-headed axe of Karia over its entrance gate. (Remains of Maussolo's palace were identified on these grounds in 2004.) Thus the ancient golden diadem with the myrtle leaves, symbol of the blessings of the goddess Afrodite, once more overlooks the city from the highest point of the castle.

## KLEOPATRA, ALEXANDER'S SISTER

Kleopatra (355-308 BC) is Alexander's only full sister, and the historical record makes clear that they maintain a bond of love and trust all their life. This bond acquires increasing political significance, nurtured by an active correspondence between the two, from the moment Alexander marches to the conquest of the Persian empire. By that time, Kleopatra already is queen of Molossia, a country bordering on Makedon.

Soon, she will also be the governing Regent, and add more offices: she figures as the only woman on the short list of *Theorodoch* (officials charged to deal with visiting envoys for sacred rites) of the Alliance of Epiros. This means that she acts as the highest religious authority in Molossia, with a diplomatic mandate that keeps her up to date with any relevant event in Greece. Moreover, in Alexander's last years Kleopatra returns to Makedon as the 'visible' head of the



dynasty.

In all such public appearances she is following the footsteps of their grandmother Eurydike, who was unusually active in politics so as to protect the throne rights of her sons; and the example of her mother Olympias, whose political and religious interventions were and are controversial to this very day.

With this background, Kleopatra inevitably becomes the centre of attention –and desire– of each and every pretender to the throne, after Alexander's death in 323 BC. In the course of the Successor Wars, all the marshalls of Alexander's armies dream up some plan to legitimise their take-over of the empire by a political marriage to Kleopatra. But in the end, her symbolic value seals her tragic fate. Kleopatra will be murdered in 308 BC by one of the rival pretenders precisely to prevent her from marrying another.

## **THE ERA OF EURYDIKE, OLYMPIAS AND KLEOPATRA**

**c. 408 BC:** Eurydike, grandmother of Alexander and Kleopatra, is born – a near contemporary of Sisygambis, by the way. She is a daughter of Sirras, one of the warlords on the northern frontier of Makedon. To seal a provisional peace after one of the frequent conflicts between Illyrians, Lyncestians and Makedonians, she is married to king Amyntas III of Makedon. At least

a generation older than her, he already has other wives, given as part of previous peace agreements. However, it turns out that the pact with Sirras, including the new bride, brings much more stability to the region. This, plus the three male heirs she produces for Amyntas, explains why he endows this youngest wife with the venerated name of Eurydike. An homage to the mother of Makedon's first famous king: Alexander I, who reigned in 498-454 BC. Amyntas and the new Eurydike are married in **392 BC**, and their first son, Alexander II, has already come of age when his father dies in 370 BC. He succeeds him on the throne, but is murdered two years later during a ritual dance. The sons of Amyntas' other wives, and even those of previous kings, claim the crown. To defend the throne rights of her younger sons, both minors, Eurydike allies herself to (and finally marries) general Ptolemaios. This, despite rumors that the general had something to do with the murderous dance. The promise she exacts from him, that he will uphold her sons for the kingship, is the first ever recorded political deed by a Makedonian queen. Even more unheard of: in **365 BC** Eurydike –not Ptolemaios– appeals publicly to a general from Athens, Ifíkrates, for military support. Ifíkrates is in the region with an expeditionary force to protect vital corn supply routes for Athens. He obliges her, squashes all other pretenders, and installs her second son,

Perdikkas, on the throne. The new king eliminates his foster-father Ptolemaios, who had proclaimed himself king meanwhile. (To Eurydike, her relation with Ptolemaios probably constituted an unavoidable, if unpleasant, compromise to save her younger sons Perdikkas and Philip. To the routed pretenders, it offered all the necessary elements for an active smearing campaign against Eurydike as an “adulteress, parricide and power-hungry witch”. Later, the enemies of Olympias will repeat the same slander all over again). Eurydike wields unrivalled influence in the period

**365-350:** the reign of Perdikkas and the initial years of Philip. Recently, archeological proof has been excavated that in her years of political power, Eurydike also makes herself quite visible on the religious scene. She signs a dedication to the Muses, “in the name of all women citizens of Makedon”, adding proudly: “I learned to read and write when my sons were grown-ups already”. The text seems to indicate that she promoted and financed public education for women. Also, on the central square of the ancient Makedonian capital of Aigai she funds a temple to Eukleia, the “Goddess of Good Reknown”. Eurydike’s appointment as high priestess of this goddess evidently is the official answer, backed up by her son the king, to the mudslingers. When Philip, born in 382 and on the throne as from **359**, reaches the zenith of his power, he will

honour his mother by putting up a statue of her in the sacred precinct of Olympia. Though her sons marry multiple wives, as long as she lives Eurydike is the woman of the highest rank at the Makedonian court. She does not hold a formal 'office' of queen-mother as in Near-Eastern countries, but she certainly is just as powerful. (Eurydike must have impressed the child Alexander as a woman of both authority and tenderness. Some specialists want to see this as the sole cause of the fondness that Alexander will later show towards the queen-mothers Ada of Karia and Sisygambis of Persia. But in those cases Alexander's memories of his grandmother were just an additional factor. As he was less than 10 years old then, Alexander cannot have enjoyed, with Eurydike, the intellectual and political discussions that forge his bond with Olympias first, and with Ada and Sisygambis afterwards.) The available evidence places the death of Eurydike around the years

**350-348 BC:** at an audience with Philip in 346, an ambassador of Athens, Aeschines, holds a speech including an *in memoriam* of Eurydike.

**373 BC:** Kleopatra's mother Polyxena is born – probably in Dodona– as a daughter of king Neoptolemos of Molossia, succeeded in 368 by his brother Arrybas (married to Polyxena's sister Troas). She is named after a daughter of king Priam of Troy. Polyxena favours her Trojan ancestry where women were allowed active

public roles, and high priestesses often were hereditary in elite families. She underlines her descent from the hero Achilles, through his son Neoptolemos and the *spear-won* Trojan princess Andromache. This preference is instilled in her son Alexander by the tutor Leonidas, a kinsman of his mother. Alexander will always name Achilles as his ancestor-hero, though his paternal lineage was just as Homeric and famous.

**370-365 BC:** at age 12–17, Philip is sent by his brother king Perdikkas as a hostage to the Illyrians, and later to Thebes. There he learns from the famous general Epaminondas, friend of his hosts, about warfare and the importance of Persia, ally of Thebes.

**360 BC:** Perdikkas, most of his cavalry (i.e., nobles), and part of his footsoldiers, are massacred by the Illyrians. Philip becomes king, reorganizes his infantry, and against all odds stops the Illyrian advance.

**359 BC:** Philip reinforces his western border against Illyria through an alliance with the king of Elimea, whose daughter Fila is his first ‘war bride’. They have no children. In Molossia, meanwhile, Polyxena is initiated in a mystery cult –probably of Afrodite or the Great Goddess– and chooses her new name “Myrtale”. (The myrtle is a symbol of Afrodite).

**358 BC:** Philip beats the Illyrians and receives, to seal the peace, his second ‘war bride’: Audata, who around 357 bears his eldest daughter

Cynnane. At that time Philip is warring in Thessaly, where he marries his third 'war bride': Filinna, who bears his half-wit son Arridaios also around 357. King Arrybas of Molossia, threatened by Illyrian raids, allies himself with Philip and takes his niece Myrtale to the faraway Makedonian-sponsored shrine on Samothrace island, to be the fourth bride of Philip.

**357 BC:** They marry in the summer of 357. She bears his son Alexander in **356 BC** (July, 20<sup>th</sup>) and one year later a daughter, Kleopatra. In 356, to underline the triumph of Philip's chariot at the Olympic Games, Polyxena/Myrtale's name is changed to Olympias.

As for the name Kleopatra ("Pride of her Ancestors"): the first Kleopatra is the mythological child of Boreas, wind-god of the North, and Oreithyia, daughter of the legendary Athenian king Erechteus. This Kleopatra marries a king of savages on the Bosphorus and suffers a tragic end; though other versions have her rule the kingdom when her Argonaut sons leave. Other 'literary' Kleopatras –Homer includes a daughter of king Tros, founder of Troy– also hail from the Doric North. The first 'real' Kleopatra c. 700 BC became the wife of Perdikkas from Argos who wandered to Makedon, where she was a local princess. She bore him Argaios, the first historical king of Makedon. This is why the 'Argead' royal Alexander I can convince the judges of the Olympic Games in 500 BC that he

has the right to participate as a true Greek, being a descendant of this Perdikkas.

**352 BC:** Defeated in a revolt against Artaxerxes III *Ochus*, the Persian prince Artabazos –satrap of N-W Ionia– obtains refuge at Philip's court in Pella with his family, including princess Barsine (born c. 358); they stay on until 344/3. In the same period, Philip takes Olympias' younger brother (born 362) also named Alexander, to Pella. They will be lovers for a time. In 342 Philip puts this Alexander on the Molossian throne, so as to reinforce Makedon's regional control.

**351 BC:** Philip's warring in Thessaly has concluded with another marriage: this one to Nikesipolis. She will later bear him a daughter, called Thessalonike to mark his victory there. The birth year is unclear (probably around 345) but the mother dies three weeks after childbirth. Olympias takes little Thessalonike in her care. The children grow up in Olympias' household, initially educated together. Alexander also has special tutors from Molossia, appointed by Olympias. They call him "little Achilles." He shows himself capable of impressing Persian ambassadors by his conversation as they await an audience with Philip in Pella.

**343 BC:** When Alexander is about 13, Philip takes over his education and sends him to Mieza. A special school has been built there for Aristotle to teach the king's son and other noble youths.

Here, Alexander forges lifelong bonds; above all, with Hefaistion. In Pella, the girls receive home education which includes literacy. Olympias and later Kleopatra can maintain their delicate/secret correspondence with personalities in Makedon and Greece because they write and read the letters themselves. Probably the girls also attain some level of religious initiation, like the one received at that age by Olympias — who still has sacred snakes at home.

In contrast, Audata gives her daughter warrior education and training: aged 15–18, Cynnane accompanies Philip on campaigns in the north. The historian Polyainos says that with her own hands she kills an Illyrian queen called Kaeria on the battlefield.

**338 BC:** After conquering Thrace, Philip also takes Meda, daughter of the routed king, for wife (no children). Around that time he marries Cynnane to his nephew Amyntas whom he keeps in reserve as secondary heir, if Alexander should die. A few months later, Philip himself marries 18-year old Eurydike, niece and ward of the powerful Makedonian noble Attalos, seemingly both for politics and for love. At the wedding banquet, and provoked by Attalos, Alexander quarrels with Philip. Then –while Kleopatra stays with her father– Alexander and his mother withdraw in protest from the court in Pella: she to Molossia, he to Illyria.

[They had clashed with Philip earlier over the



‘Pixodaro affair’. The Karian satrap offered (when Philip’s intentions to invade Ionia were already evident, and the Achaemenid empire was in chaos after the demise of Artaxerxes III *Ochus*) to marry his daughter to Arridaios. Alexander sent his own secret ambassador –the actor Thessalos– to Pixodaro, offering himself as groom. This sabotaged the marriage plan. Philip received a warning from general Parmenion who used his son Filotas as the messenger. Filotas was present at Philip’s reaction: Alexander got a fierce scolding, and several of his counsellors/friends like Ptolemy, Nearchos and Harpalos were exiled by Philip.]

While Alexander is alienated from his father and supported by the Illyrians, he might be promoted as a rival to the throne of Makedon – an old tradition in the Argead house. So after some months Philip persuades him to return to court, with the promise of recognition as sole heir.

**337 BC:** By the time he reappears at Pella, Attalos has left for Asia Minor as commander of the expeditionary force against Ionia: this way, one source of friction is sidelined. Philip aims his other diplomatic offensive at the Molossian king Alexander, then aged 26, inviting him to marry Kleopatra. This would preclude a rupture between the two monarchies even if Olympias remained obstinately hostile. However, she too accepts an appeasement with the clear recognition of her status as first ranking queen.

The proof is that, in this period, Philip has the Athenian sculptor Leochares at work in the sacred precinct of Olympia. There he builds the *Philippeion*, a memorial of marble, ivory and gold which contains statues of the core Royal Family: Philip's parents Amyntas and Eurydike; Philip himself; and Olympias and Alexander.

**336 BC:** for Kleopatra, Philip prepares a brilliant state wedding (which he had not done for Cynnane, thereby showing that Olympias and Kleopatra outrank Audata and Cynnane) in the old capital of Aigai. Many guests, everybody who ranks anywhere, are assembled from the whole of the Greek world. In October, the marriage is duly contracted and celebrated by a formal symposium. The following day, processions and games are held at the theatre. Philip makes his entrance between the two Alexanders, his son and son-in-law. The new concord is on official display, and to mark his confidence Philip walks at a distance from his bodyguard.

There, in full view of the audience, he is fatally stabbed by young Pausanias, who had been assaulted/raped on Attalos' orders while Philip had refused to give him redress. The murderer has someone with horses waiting for him outside the theater. However, he is pursued and killed on the spot by Perdikkas, Leonnatos and others. Alexander, immediately acclaimed by Antipater and Parmenion, is proclaimed king. As usual, rivals are eliminated. They include, on

Alexander's orders, Attalos and Amyntas, Cynnane's husband. And, on Olympias' orders, Eurydike and her baby.

Alexander the Molossian takes Kleopatra back to Dodona where she bears him two children: Kadmeia (335) and in 334 Neoptolemos II (r. 317-312 and 302-297).

**335 BC:** For the first and only time, Alexander allows a (half-)sister to remarry, offering Cynnane to his staunch ally king Langaros; but on the way to Makedon he dies. She exiles herself to a fringe region of Makedon with her daughter Adeia (born c. 336) whom she trains as a warrior.

**334 BC:** While Alexander the Great invades Persia, Kleopatra's husband goes to war in Italy, leaving her in Dodona as regent. As food shortages are frequent and Makedon cares for its client kingdoms –Alexander can pay from his booty–, grain shipments are organized by Kleopatra c. 332 from North African Cyrene. A surplus is sent on by her to Corinth. Two bigger shipments are sent to Olympias in Makedon. All the other clients registered on Cyrene's marble plaque are state-cities; Kleopatra and Olympias are the only persons mentioned by name. There are other providers of grain shipments, too: many owe Alexander, after his triumph over Persia at Issos on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 333.

**332 BC, November:** Alexander sends Olympias and Kleopatra, but not his half-sisters, a great amount of golden 'darik' coins: booty from Gaza.

**331 BC:** In the winter of 331/0, the Molossian Alexander dies in an ambush in Italy. His corpse, hacked in two, will later be returned to Kleopatra by the wife of a captive Italian, to ransom him. The Oracle of Dodona had warned Alexander against “death in Pandosia”. He skirted a so-named region in Molossia, but was killed in the Italian Pandosia. Athens sends a formal embassy with condolences to queen Kleopatra in Dodona. By now (**330 BC**) she is not only acting head of state, but also the only female ‘Theorodoch’ in the Epirote Alliance. (Professor Carney explains: “Involvement of royal women in international religious activities should be understood as diplomatic activity as well, in terms of *philia* whereby women were expected to both convey benefits and receive them in dealing with other monarchs.”) Olympias too holds religious office. In 333 she makes offerings the goddess Hygieia in Athens, beseeching protection for Alexander’s health. Also, she presents splendid public dedications to the shrine of Delphi in 327/6.

**329 BC:** Olympias tires of her seldom successful opposition to governor Antipater. (Alexander still has to rely on him to send reinforcements, and to keep down rebellion in mainland Greece.) She retires to Molossia, which she calls “my kingdom” in diplomatic correspondence with Athens. For several years c. 329–325 she shares with Kleopatra the regency in Dodona. But when Antipater’s power wanes (dependence on him

lessens, as Alexander's imperial might grows in Persia), to undermine him further they decide the royal family needs a visible head in Pella. As a result:

**325/4 BC**, winter: Kleopatra goes to Makedon, where she leads a more joyful life than in Dodona. She also funds a tomb for court musicians. Plutarch, in his *Moralia*, criticises Alexander for being too soft on his sister: "When he heard that she had had intercourse with a handsome young man, Alexander did not burst out in rage, but remarked that she ought to be allowed to get some enjoyment."

**324 BC**: Alexander sends shockwaves through Greece with his Exiles' Decree, proclaimed in August 324 at the Olympic Games, where 20,000 exiles have gathered for the occasion. The decree is designed to keep the Greek city-states busy with internal problems, and to boost Alexander's own partisans in each city as a counter against rebellion. It threatens disaster to rulers like Dionysios of Herakleia Pontos. Herakleian exiles, who found favour at Alexander's court in Persia, want to return to depose him. Alexander will not go back on his decree, so Dionysios recurs to Kleopatra. She sponsors him for past or future services, writes to Alexander from Pella and obtains a deferment. (As in other cases, this will mean a voiding of the decree after Alexander's death. The exiles in Persia will appeal in vain to Perdikkas.) Dionysios is saved, remains king to

his death, and for additional insurance marries the Persian princess Amastris in 322.

**323 BC:** On Alexanders death in June, Kleopatra and Olympias conclude that in view of their enmity with Antipater and the need to protect the heirs of the royal house, they urgently need a Makedonian general-with-army for husband. Leonnatos, *somatofylax* now appointed satrap of the Hellespont region, is nearest at hand. Kinsman through grandmother Eurydike, he clearly wants to imitate (and succeed) Alexander, increasing his physical resemblance to him in hairstyle and adopting a luxurious Persian lifestyle. Kleopatra offers Leonnatos their marriage in Pella, and he accepts. This allows him to disregard Perdikkas' orders that he should help Eumenes to conquer Cappadocia. Telling Eumenes he is off to marry Kleopatra, he goes to Makedon instead. Officially he comes to help Antipater against the Lamian uprising, but he plans to proclaim himself regent/king, with Kleopatra as queen. However, he dies in battle in 322 before they can marry.

**322 BC:** Kleopatra and Olympias need an alternative solution. They write to Perdikkas offering her hand. He tells her to come to Sardès, where he is encamped for his campaign to put Eumenes in control of Cappadocia. She doubts and demands guarantees. He appoints her satrap of Lydia and gives her an effective military command:

“She was placed over the Makedonian garrison in the capital Sardès.” But meanwhile, Antipater has also sent his daughter Nikaia as a bride to Perdikkas, whose brother Alketas disputes Eumenes as to which of the two offered brides is politically most convenient. In the end, events will dictate that Perdikkas marries neither. (Note that Olympias does not use Thessalonike, who remains with her, as an alternative marriage pawn, putting Kleopatra’s needs first. Also she fears that, once they are married, a Makedonian general/husband for Thessalonike could be uncontrollable for her aims.)

**321 BC:** At the same time, evidently to outflank both Olympias/Kleopatra and Antipater, half-sister Cynnane embarks on a not political but military ‘solution’ to the succession. She raises an army, evades Antipater’s efforts to stop her, and reaches Asia Minor with her daughter. She offers this daughter, Adeia, as a bride to the half-wit Arridaios, now co-king together with Alexander’s baby son. When Alketas has Cynnane killed, the angry reaction of the troops to this murder forces Perdikkas to accept the marriage of Adeia to Arridaios, in Pisidia. Meanwhile, Antigonos falls out with Perdikkas and flees to Antipater and Krateros. Using his knowledge of the secret dealings of Olympias/Kleopatra, he convinces them that the planned marriage of Perdikkas with Alexander’s sister is a “casus belli”. Antipater and Krateros muster their armies.

**321 BC:** Even so, Kleopatra travels to Sardès, knowingly risking her life, as the murder of Cynnane reminds her shortly after her arrival. Perdikkas is already off to Egypt, but she clearly still believes he will come out on top in the Successor Wars. She stays in Sardès and comes in open conflict with Antipater's plans –the Nikaia marriage– by publicly accepting the betrothal gifts of Perdikkas. They arrive with the message (brought by Eumenes, so Arrian says) that he will repudiate Nikaia for her. Eumenes appears at Sardès with his cavalry, offering to protect Kleopatra against Antipater. Being a Greek from Kardia, non-Makedonian, Eumenes cannot hope to become king through a marriage with Kleopatra, but he can aspire to be Regent. And certainly he shares a common hatred of Antipater with Olympias and Kleopatra. However, she declines his protection and tells him to leave, fearing that the Makedonians would blame her for any battles between the forces of Eumenes and Antipater. (Also she calculates that Eumenes would lose.)

**320 BC:** Antipater arrives and scolds Kleopatra for her *philia* with Eumenes and Perdikkas. She counter-attacks launching charges of her own. Antipater decides not to kill her, probably because of the recent uproar over Cynnane's murder; or maybe because he thinks of marrying her later to Kassander. Then he is off to the Triparadeisos settlement, since Perdikkas has



been killed in Egypt. Kleopatra remains in Sardès to avoid Antipater, and because, this way, she stays close to her obvious marriage market. She may now be thinking of Antigonos winning the wars. Or, if other contenders (Lysimachos, Ptolemy or Seleukos) win, they too will inevitably come to Asia Minor. Her agreement with Antigonos may be that she is safe as long as she does not marry (=legitimise) any of his rivals. He cannot marry her, nor his son Demetrios: that would unite all other rivals against them.

**319 BC:** Antipater dies, leaving as Regent not his son Kassander but general Polyperchon. The two go to war in the Peloponnese. Polyperchon allies himself with Eumenes, who remains in Asia Minor. They convince Olympias to leave Molossia and take over control in Makedon. Kleopatra (fearing a trap? Or kept in the dark by Antigonos?) stays in Sardès.

**317 BC:** Olympias briefly gains total power in Makedon. This is the “War of the Women” against Adeas, who has allied herself with Kassander, but does not wait for his return from southern Greece. She attacks Olympias on her way to Pella, in the frontier valley of Euía. As the two armies draw up for the clash, Adeas appears in full battle gear to lead her troops. Olympias appears in religious dress (the contemporary author Duris says: “as a Maenad”, i.e. as an initiate/priestess of the Great Goddess). When the

Makedonian soldiers see Alexander's mother, they go over to her to a man. Olympias triumphs and has Adea and Arridaios executed, along with Kassander's brother Nikanor and many followers. She also destroys, in **317 BC**, the tomb of Iollas. But she has no general to make good use of her troops. Kassander arrives and besieges her in Pydna. Her ally Polyperchon sells out to Kassander, murdering Herakles and Barsine in the process. Kassander, victorious in Makedon, has Olympias killed in 316. At the same time, he forces Thessalonike to marry him. (Six years later he will have the child-king Alexander IV and his mother Roxane murdered in secret.) Also in 316, Eumenes is finally defeated and killed by Antigonos.

**316-308 BC:** The years pass by, Kleopatra is losing her child-bearing age, thus her value for transmitting the royal heritage by marriage. Reuniting Alexander's dominions under one king and queen (=Kleopatra) becomes a utopia. In fact, Alexander's relics can be eliminated with impunity: his mother, wives and children are assassinated. The murder in **310 BC** of the child-king Alexander, Kleopatra's nephew, makes her fear that Antigonos may eliminate her too. The relation to Alexander is a cornerstone of Ptolemy's propaganda, but Antigonos has no such restraints. Finally she "quarrels" with him, as Diodoros says, implying a previous agreement that has broken down. Then Antigonos goes far

away, to fight Seleukos in Babylon. But Ptolemy comes near, and near to victory in mainland Greece: he holds 'Freedom Games' in Corinth. Therefore, in **308 BC**, Kleopatra finally bolts from Sardès – to her death.

Diodoros writes in XX.37.2–6:

“Kleopatra started from Sardès in order to cross over to Ptolemy.”... “The governor of Sardès, who had orders from Antigonos to watch Kleopatra, prevented her departure; but later, as commanded by the prince, he treacherously brought about her death through the agency of certain women. But Antigonos, not wishing the murder to be laid at his door, punished some of the women for having plotted against her, and took care that she got a royal funeral.”

If Antigonos thought that punishing the 'culpable' women would avoid his blame for Kleopatra's murder, it means they were secret traitors, not known as his agents. And anyway, although he had ordered her death, he kept up public respect for Alexander's sister. In Kleopatra's honour, he organized the most lavish and cynical funeral ceremonies Sardès had ever seen.

But honours she certainly deserved: her

efforts to save the Argead dynasty, knowingly putting her own life on the line, prove she was – like her mother– a brave woman. Her political moves, trying at the same time to preserve Alexander’s legacy but also to avoid provoking a civil war in Makedon, were doomed from the start. But that was because of external reasons, not because Kleopatra lacked in courage or intelligence.

As stated before, the scope of this book does not call for a complete description of the extraordinary –and polemical– woman that was Olympias. So I warmly recommend the brilliant biography of Alexander’s mother published in 2006 by professor Elizabeth Carney. But an earlier book of hers, *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (2000), includes some abridged biographical sketches, which allow me to sum up how professor Carney evaluates the character and career of Olympias:

“The sources portray Olympias as fond of religion in general, and Dionysiac and other mystery cults in particular (Plut. *Al.* 2; Ath. XII.560 & XIV.659). She was indeed active in religious matters and particularly devoted to Dionysiac cults. In this she resembled other women of the Macedonian royal family (who seem often to take prominent roles in religious activities), women of the Hellenic and Hellenized world in general (who often played important

roles in family and even civic cults, and who were said to be especially fond of Dionysiac and other mystery cults) and, of course, her own son.”

<...>

“Tradition says that Alexander and his mother were close throughout their lives, and implies that he and his father were competitive and less close. In this case, tradition probably is correct.”

<...>

“Whatever the nature of personal dealings between Philip and Olympias, their public relationship and Olympias’ status were dramatically affected by Philip’s last marriage [to a niece of Attalos, who at the wedding banquet openly questioned Alexander’s legitimacy as heir to the throne]. Alexander went in exile, taking his mother with him. <...> The public quarrel between royal father and royal son was quickly settled, and Alexander returned to court. <...> It seems likely that Olympias’ return was a necessary part of the formal reconciliation, and that she must have been present by the time of her daughter’s marriage.”

<...>

“Alexander’s absence from 334 on meant that for the rest of his reign the only members of the dynasty in residence in Macedonia were women, and of these, his mother remained the most prominent. Indeed, as the years passed Olympias came to stand for the dynasty, both in formal

matters and in the minds of many of the people.”

<...>

“Olympias’ role between 334 and 323 encompassed much more than that of a devoted and doting mother. There can be no doubt that she played a public role in the affairs of state, both external and internal. What is much less clear is to what degree her role was authorized by her son and to what degree she used the opportunity of her son’s absence for her own aggrandizement.

<...>

Olympias was assumed by Athenian politicians to have had a role in Macedonian public policy (Hyp. Eux.19-20) and possibly Molossian too (Hyp. Eux. 25). <...> The evidence certainly suggests that both Olympias and her daughter exercised considerable public power in Epirus and Macedonia, and to some degree in the entire Greek peninsula. It seems likely that at least some of the time they shared this power. Extant evidence confirms only concerted efforts by mother and daughter, and offers not a single example of conflict.”

<...>

“After Alexander’s departure, our literary tradition refers to an apparently voluminous correspondence between Alexander and Olympias.<...> The sources indicate that Olympias tried to influence her son’s policy by means of epistolary attacks on various figures at

Alexander's court. Unfortunately, the authenticity of any of the correspondence preserved in the sources is doubtful. <...> In some sense, all the men she is supposed to have accused <...> did prove dangerous to the stability of her son's rule."

<...>

Plutarch implies it was actually Antipater's complaints about Olympias, rather than hers about him, that wore away at Alexander. If, as it appears, Olympias had claimed for many years that Antipater was exceeding his powers and could not be trusted, and Alexander ultimately came to interpret Antipater's actions, rightly or wrongly, in the same fashion, it is difficult to see how Olympias' influence can be denied."

<...>

"Olympias' struggles with Antipater, and perhaps those with others, may also mean that Macedonian nobles, ever desirous to limit the power of the monarchy, found it safer to attack the mother of the king, than the king."

<...>

"From the moment Olympias heard of her son's death and the birth of Alexander IV, she must have known that the chances of her grandson surviving long enough to be more than a figurehead were slender indeed; and that if she took an active role as Alexander IV's advocate, she lost what little security her relatively remote base in Epirus and her cousin's protection

offered. Diodoros (XVIII.58.3-4; XIX.35.6) makes it clear that she was quite conscious of the danger of becoming her grandson's supporter, yet she did so. She risked her life, and lost it, in an attempt to ensure her grandson's survival and ultimate rule."

<...>

"Olympias' abrupt departure for Macedonia and acceptance of Polyperchon's offer [to take over responsibility for her grandson, and to act in his name] in fall 317, require more explanation than those who paint Olympias as a politically incompetent harpy tend to recognize. The immediate cause was either the knowledge that Adea Eurydice was now allied with her old enemy and Antipater's son, Cassander, and had made him Regent; or the realization or suspicion that something like that was imminent."

<...>

"Olympias came back to Macedonia with her grandson, her nephew Aeacides, and some Epirote forces as well as some of Polyperchon's. Judging by subsequent events, apparently the Macedonians did not perceive her as an invader. Adea Eurydice and her husband met the invaders at Euía on the Epirote-Macedonian border. Duris (ap. Ath. 560 ff) called the encounter the first war between women and claimed that Olympias went to battle to the beat of a drum, like a Bacchant, and that Adea Eurydice was equipped as a Macedonian soldier. There may not have



been a real battle, as the Macedonian army immediately went over to Olympias and the royal husband and wife were soon captured. After treating the royal pair cruelly, Olympias caused the deaths of both. She also killed one of Cassander's brothers, desecrated the tomb of another, Iolaus, and brought about the deaths of one hundred supporters of Cassander."

<...>

"Even if the murder of these people constituted a political misjudgement, the more important point is that Olympias, her forces and her allies failed not because of alleged or real political blunders, but because of military blunders. There were a series of military blunders. Polyperchon certainly bears some responsibility, but so must Olympias, who either believed that she had the military skills sufficient to handle the situation, or put her trust in men and in plans that she should not have.

When in spring 316 Olympias surrendered to Cassander on a promise of personal safety, her fate was sealed. It proved difficult to find someone to kill Olympias (confirming that her failures were primarily military, not political), but Cassander was finally able to do so."

## THE SUSA WEDDINGS & QUEEN AMASTRIS

The Successor Wars saw the early demise of one of Alexander's key projects: the fusion of the leading Eastern and Western families at the grand ceremony of the Susa Weddings. Arrian explains in *Anabasis* VII, 4:

“In Susa also he celebrated both his own wedding and those of his Companions. He himself married Barsine, the eldest daughter of Darius, <...> and to the rest of his Companions he gave the choicest daughters of the Persians and Medes, to the number of eighty.

The weddings were celebrated after the Persian manner, seats being placed in a row for the bridegrooms; and after the banquet the brides came in and seated themselves, each one near her own husband. The bridegrooms took them by the right hand and kissed them; the king

being the first to begin, for the weddings of all were conducted in the same way.

This appeared the most popular thing which Alexander ever did, and it proved his affection for his Companions. Each man took his own bride and led her away; and on all without exception, Alexander bestowed dowries.”

Chares the chamberlain detailed the festivities in the tenth book of his *Stories about Alexander*:

“When he overcame Darius, he concluded marriages of himself and of his friends besides, constructing ninety-two bridal chambers in the same place. The structure was large enough for a hundred couches, and in it every couch was adorned with nuptial coverings, and was made of silver worth twenty minae; but his own couch had supports of gold. He also included in his invitation to the banquet all his personal friends and placed them on couches opposite himself and the other bridegrooms. The rest of his forces, both land and naval, he entertained in the courtyard with the foreign embassies and visitors.

Moreover, the structure was decorated

sumptuously and magnificently with expensive draperies and fine linens, and underfoot with purple and crimson rugs interwoven with gold. To keep the pavilion firmly in place there were columns thirty feet high, gilded and silvered and studded with jewels. The entire enclosure was surrounded with rich curtains having animal patterns interwoven in gold, their rods being overlaid with gold and silver. The perimeter of the courtyard measured four stadia. The call to dinner was sounded on the trumpet, not only at the time of the nuptial banquets, but always when on other occasions he chanced to be making libation, so that the entire army knew what was going on.

The nuptials lasted for five days, and very many persons, foreigners as well as Greeks, contributed their services. For example, the jugglers from India were especially noteworthy; also Scymnos of Tarantos, Filistides of Syracuse, and Herakleitos of Mitylene; after them the rhapsode Alexis of Tarantos gave a recital.

There appeared also the harp virtuosi Kratinos of Methymna, Aristonymos of

Athens, Athenodoros of Teos; there were songs with harp-accompaniment by Herakleitos of Tarantos and Aristokrates of Thebes. There was present also the harper Fasimelos. The singers to flute-accompaniment who appeared were Dionysios of Herakleia and Hyperbolos of Cyzikos; there came on also flute-virtuosi, who first played the Pythian melody, and after that, accompaniments for the bands of singers and dancers; they were Timotheus, Frynichos, Kafisias, Difantos, and Evios of Chalcis. Plays were acted by the tragedians Thessalos, Athenodoros, and Aristokritos, and by the comedians Lycon, Formion, and Ariston.

And from that day forth the people who had previously been called 'Dionysos-flatterers' were called 'Alexander-flatterers', because of the extravagant presents in which Alexander took such delight."

However epic the weddings, Alexander's grand scheme came to nothing. Immediately after his death the Makedonian husbands repudiated all the Persian brides of Susa, with only one exception, Apame. She was a daughter of the Baktrian leader Spitamenes, who had continued

the war against Alexander for some time after the death of Darius. (Typical of Alexander, having taken care of the daughter of a distinguished enemy, and finally marrying her with all honours to one of his generals.) She was given to Seleukos.

The marriage lasted: he may have loved her really. And of course Apame was very useful to him. She gave him good connections with the Persian nobility that supported him efficiently in the Successor Wars. She died a queen, and mother of a durable dynasty.

## **AMASTRIS**

Only one other Susa bride also became a queen: Sisygambis' granddaughter (through her younger son Oxyatres) Amastris. This imperial princess lived up to her famous name, which in Old Persian means 'woman of strength', for Amastris certainly was a 'woman of power' in her era. Three times in her life she was on the verge of becoming the queen of the whole Empire.

First in 338 BC when, only a baby, for political reasons she was promised in marriage to the High King Artaxerxes III (but he died shortly afterwards). Then in 324 BC, when Alexander married her in Susa to general Krateros, who was sent to replace Antipater as the Regent of Greece. (If he had not fallen on the battlefield, Krateros surely would have become Alexander's successor,

so Amastris could have been his queen. Instead, she ended up as the wife of king Dionysios and – after his death– widow queen of Herakleia.)

The third key moment was 302 BC, when Amastris married king Lysimachos, a serious contender in the fight for Alexander's legacy. After the battle of Ipsos in 301 BC, Lysimachos and his queen Amastris were, for a short time, the arbiters of the Successor Wars.

Evidently, Amastris had no say over her first two marriages. They were arranged by her father Oxyatres –surely on the advice of Sisygambis– to strengthen his position at court. Her second wedding, in Susa, also responded to a personal and political interest of Alexander. He wanted Krateros to be part of a new *core Royal Family* of his empire, now built up around the queen-mother Sisygambis, her three granddaughters and their husbands.

To wit: the High King Alexander, who was planning his next military expedition towards the East to widen the empire; his 'prime minister' and brother-in-law Hefaistion, who remained at the centre in the old Median capital of Ekbatana to run day to day government; and his top general and also in-law Krateros, who was to be sent to the West. The strategic tasks for Krateros were to reinforce Makedon's hold over Greece (replacing old Antipater) and to subdue Carthago, so as to widen the empire in the Mediterranean.

The alleged supreme command that Perdikkas later claimed to have received from Alexander after Hefaistion's death –Perdikkas spread the story that Alexander, on his deathbed, had given him his signet ring– was only a military command in the central army under Alexander. Perdikkas never got the viceroy status that was given to Hefaistion and Krateros, as their marriage to Sisygambis' granddaughters emphasized.

But Krateros, however capable a general and however much admired by the whole army, did not see himself as a political leader. So he let Antipater convince him to drop Alexander's orders, as if voided by the king's death, and to limit himself to shore up Antipater's regency. In a classical move, Antipater ensured Krateros' loyalty by giving him one of his daughters for wife, polygamy being accepted in Makedon.

Everybody bowed to this new grand design – but for the imperial princess Amastris. She refused to play second fiddle to Krateros' new wife, and by extension, to Antipater. There was not much status in being *one of the wives* (in practical terms, just a Persian concubine) of Krateros, however powerful he might become. So even the lesser status of being the –sole– wife of a local dynast looked more attractive. This explains Amastris' unexpected reappearance in 322 BC as queen of Herakleia Pontos, a little kingdom on the Black Sea coast. Some sources say that



“Krateros himself gave her away at the wedding”.

The king of Herakleia, Dionysios, was known as a friend of Alexander’s sister Kleopatra. She had successfully pleaded with Alexander to protect him from his exiled enemies who had found, or bought, favour at the court in Babylon. So the election of Dionysios for Amastris’ new husband was less haphazard than it seemed. Her father Oxyatres, casting around for a suitable (re)marriage for his daughter, may have gone through ‘family channels’ and asked Kleopatra for advice.

It did well for Amastris: Dionysios never let her down. They were married for 17 years, in which she gave him two sons and a daughter; and after his death she became Dowager Queen of Herakleia. The local historian of this city, Memnon of Herakleia, would later write:

“The greatest good fortune came to Dionysios from his second marriage. He married Amastris, the daughter of Oxathres. So she and Stateira/Barsine were cousins, and also they had been brought up together, which gave them a special affection for each other. Amastris went to live with Dionysius. When he was about to die, he left Amastris in charge of the government.”

Four years later, she was still seen as so influential that another would-be successor to

Alexander, general Lysimachos, who had established himself as king of Thrace, proposed to her. She accepted, and they had a son whom they called Alexander for all the obvious propaganda reasons. Memnon comments:

“Lysimachos made Amastris his wife. To start with, he was very much in love with her, and soon sent for her to join him at Sardès, where he showed her equal affection. But later he took [for wife] Arsinoe, [the daughter] of Ptolemy *Filadelfos*, and this caused Amastris to part from him. After leaving him, she took control of Herakleia; she revived the city by her presence, and created the new city of Amastris.”

The geographer Strabo too tells about the city of Amastris on the Black Sea coast. There, many coins have been found bearing her portrait with the inscription “Amastris Queen”. The fact that Amastris coined her own money meant that she was the real ruler of the kingdom, not just a caretaker for her young but power-hungry sons. Memnon relates the sad end of the story:

“Her sons Klearchos and Oxathres caused their mother, who had not particularly interfered in their affairs, to be drowned in the sea on board a ship. Lysimachos still felt some glow of his former passion for her, and he killed the

two matricides. He was full of praise for Amastris; he marvelled at her character and the way she ruled, how she had built up her realm in size and importance and strength.”

And a *sizeable, important and strong* kingdom in the North of Asia Minor was exactly what Lysimachos was looking for, when he asked for Amastris’ hand. He was facing Antigonos in the final stages of the Succession Wars, and needed a crucial power-base at the back of Antigonos’ dominions in Asia Minor. By marrying Amastris, he could use her kingdom as headquarters on the Black Sea coast, well protected by Amastris’ capable navy.

Already allied to and militarily backed by Kassander, he now also acted to obtain the cooperation of Antigonos’ other two rivals: Ptolemy and Seleukos. But as Ptolemy only provided some (not very decisive) naval support, the key to the plan was the eventual assistance of Seleukos. Because of the scarcity of contemporary sources, it is not clearly established how this success was reached.

Lysimachos and Seleukos had not seen each other in twenty years, since the dark days of Alexander’s death in Babylon. Now they had to communicate by messenger over a distance of several thousand kilometers. How could Lysimachos convince Seleukos to trust him to

such a high degree as to accept the deadly gamble of a joint attack against Antigonos?

For a possible explanation of their surprisingly rapid understanding and confidence, we may remember who, and what, their respective wives were. Memnon stresses that Amastris and her cousin Stateira/Barsine had been brought up together in Susa (that is, in the household of Sisygambis), “which gave them a special affection for each other”. They had starred in the mass-wedding at Susa; and another famous ‘Susa bride’ was Apame, the wife of Seleukos.

The historians say that Seleukos held his Persian wife in high regard, as she was able to ensure him of the loyalty of the Persian nobility that supported his long struggle for power in Babylon. On the other hand Memnon affirms that Lysimachos “was always full of praise for Amastris; he marvelled at her character and the way she ruled”. So both queens were respected political advisors, and had a common (Susa) background. It does not seem too far-fetched to suppose that Amastris and Apame were instrumental in helping Lysimachos and Seleukos reach their decisive agreement.

What followed would have been a top story in any military history, if the details had been better preserved. But what we do know is that when, in the fall of 302 BC, the envoys of Lysimachos and

Amastris finally found Seleukos in his eastern dominions near India, action was immediate. Seleukos took with him 480 war elephants (his frontier settlement with the Indian king Chandragupta had just added 500 of those beasts to his armory), 100 scythed chariots, 12,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry. So began a daunting journey of some 2,000 miles over mountains and deserts, to join Lysimachos in Asia Minor. He arrived just in time before the winter closed the mountain passes of Armenia and Anatolia, and settled his troops with those of his allies in Herakleia.

From there, the joint force of 64,000 foot and 15,000 horse set out in the spring of 301 to attack, and finally rout, Antigonos with his 70,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry at Ipsos. Seleukos' elephants would turn out to be the key of their triumph. In the aftermath of this titanic clash there is no doubt that Lysimachos, who had provided the heart of the coalition army plus its protected staging area in Herakleia, and had been the commander-in-chief at the final battle, now was the leading man among Alexander's Successors; a powerful king efficiently backed up by a brilliant queen of imperial descent. But Lysimachos and Amastris could and did not intend to reestablish Alexander's empire; if only because Seleukos and Ptolemy were solidly entrenched in their portions of the realm.

And there was worse to come: Antigonos' son

Demetrios had not only escaped from Ipsos alive, with a sizeable part of his forces, but was determined to continue attacking Lysimachos. The conflict was fought out on the Mediterranean front, so Seleukos, who had to return to his inland dominions, could not give his allies much help. Demetrios' assaults came with such surprising ferocity, that Lysimachos was forced to upgrade his alliance with Ptolemy. In 300 BC, Lysimachos willy-nilly married Ptolemy's daughter Arsinoe.

Amastris, true to style, again refused to play second fiddle to another wife. She withdrew to her city Amastris where she continued to act as a queen in her own right, until her tragic death in 284 BC. Anyway, for nearly 40 years after Alexander's death Amastris had shown herself able to maintain her royal status and to wield real power - an astonishing success for a Persian wife during the Successor Wars. Sisygambis' teachings on kingship at the Old Palace of Susa had not been lost.

## SECRET KEEPERS OF THE EMPIRE: THE *KING'S EYE*

Artasyras (c. 450-400? BC), satrap of Hyrcania, was a relative of Artaxerxes II. His family had been held in high esteem by the throne ever since his like-named forebear had been the principal counsellor of Darius the Great. Usually, Artasyras is only mentioned as overlord of Hyrcania, a coastal zone of the Caspian Sea. But Plutarch – citing Ktesias– reveals he also held the much more powerful office of the *King's Eye*. In other words: he was the head of the secret service of the Persian empire.

Ktesias, writing about the battle of Kunaxa and the death of Cyrus the Younger, simply assumed that everybody knew –which in his days must have been true– that Artasyras led the empire's spy service:

“When Cyrus was now dead, Artasyras, the King's Eye, passed by on horseback, and having observed the eunuchs

lamenting, he asked the most trusty of them, "Who is this, Pariskas, whom you sit here deploring?" He replied, "Do not you see, o Artasyras, that it is my master, Cyrus?" Then Artasyras wondering, bade the eunuch keep the dead body safe. And going in all haste to Artaxerxes, who was in great suffering with his thirst and his wound, he with much joy assured him that he had seen Cyrus dead."

Immediately after the battle of Cunaxa, Artaxerxes II tied him even closer to the Royal House: he married Artasyras' son Orontes to his eldest daughter Rodogune. And Artasyras' territorial sway over Hyrcania was broadened by making Orontes satrap of neighbouring Armenia.

This kinship-stratagem to reinforce the loyalty bonds of the secret service chief to the High King underscores the peculiar marriage policy of the Achaemenid rulers. They did not use their daughters for diplomacy by pairing them off to foreign kings, but for domestic 'insurance'. They married them out to the Persian nobles who headed the most powerful offices at Court, or governed the key satrapies.

For the same reason –loyalty based on family ties– the High Kings often appointed their most direct relatives to such offices. These two factors together explain why so many royal ladies were



married to half-brothers, uncles or cousins. (This also makes it quite plausible that Artaxerxes II, in the last part of his long reign, would apply the same policy to Artasyras' successor in the office of the King's Eye. That is, to name his own nephew Arshama to the post, and to give him another royal princess for wife: Rodogune's much younger sister Sisygambis.)

The King's Eye and the secret service he directed had a long history, of which the classical Greek authors offer only a few glimpses. In 472 BC Aischylos was the first writer to mention them in his *Persai* (978 ff.). He made the chorus ask the defeated Xerxes if he had left behind in Greece, among his slain officers, also "his own devoted Alpistos, the King's Eye, who oversaw Persians by the tens of thousands."

Later, Herodotos revealed that this secret service had been set up even before the Persians: about 650 BC by the first king of the Medes, whom he calls Deiokes. It was his solution to the problem of obtaining the correct information for ruling justly, Herodotos says in Book I, 100:

"After he had established his capital at Ekbatana, his spies were busy watching and listening in every corner of his dominions. And if they heard of any oppressive act, he summoned the guilty one and gave him the punishment befitting his offense."

Xenofon, in *Oeconomicus* IV 8, confirms that the Persian High King often travelled about to inspect his empire personally, but also received “reports from his trusted agents on territories that he himself did not see.” In reality, this refers both to a secret service, and to the office of roving inspectors who travel throughout the realm, to control if the governors are not neglecting their duties. This latter function is revealed indirectly in an extant letter sent by Darius the Great to one of his most trusted vassals, Gadatas:

“I hear that you are obedient to my commands, but not to all. In so far as you cultivate my land by transplanting the gardens of Beyond the Euphrates to the territories of Lower Asia, let me praise you with public notice; and because of these things, a great gratitude is held for you in the House of the King. But <...> you exacted tribute from the gardeners of the temples of my gods, and ordered them to cultivate the profane land, being ignorant of the intent of my ancestors to the gods who have spoken all the truth to the Persians.”

When Darius writes “I hear” in a public document, he evidently means that he has got this information from one of his ‘ears’. That is, he

received an official report about an infringement by Gadatas on standing orders about the inviolability of temple properties. Gadatas has committed the error of not upholding the policy of religious tolerance and respect for old temple privileges, dictated by Cyrus and his successors.

Within an empire of extreme ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity, the High Kings had to rely heavily on their 'Eyes and Ears' to maintain their overriding policy decisions. Xenophon explains more about this efficient network of spies and informers in Book 8, 6, 16 of his *Cyropaedia*:

"We have noticed that this regulation is still in force, whether it was instituted by Cyrus –as is said–, or not: year by year, a man makes the circuit of the provinces with an army, to help any satrap who may need help, to humble any one who may be growing rebellious, and to adjust matters if any one is careless about seeing the taxes paid or protecting the inhabitants, or to see that the land is kept under cultivation, or if any one is neglectful of anything else he has been ordered to attend to.

But if he cannot set it right, it is his business to report it to the king. When the king hears of it, he takes measures in regard to the offender. And among those on who they report, often the rumor

goes out that ‘the king’s brother is coming’, or ‘the king’s Eye’. Though sometimes they do not put in an appearance at all, for each of them turns back, wherever he may be, when the king commands.”

They were also mentioned in the comedies of Aristofanes that amused Alexander so much. Aristofanes just poked fun with that court title of ‘the King’s Eye’. In his comedy *Acharnians*, first staged 425 BC, he put an Eye on the stage. The actor must have worn a mask that was painted with one big eye, earning Aristofanes more laughs from the public. Aristotle however, who taught Alexander as a boy, certainly did not take the Persian secret service for a joke. This is evident from an admiring remark in his work *On the Cosmos* (398 a-b):

“The pomp of Cambyeses, Xerxes and Darius was ordered on a grand scale and touched the heights of majesty and magnificence. The king himself, they say, lived in Susa or Ekbatana, invisible to all, in a marvellous palace [...]. Outside the palace, the leaders and most eminent men were drawn up in order, some [...] called ‘guards’ and the ‘listening-watch’, so that the king himself [...] might see everything and hear everything.”

In the surviving documents of the Achaemenid empire – where few would dare to write about the feared informers – no direct reference to the King’s Eye has yet been found. But there is a mention of his underlings, the ‘ears’ of the High King, in the Aramaic papyrus C 27.9 from Elephantine island near Assuan in Egypt, dating to the Persian occupation. In this text, the expression *gwshky* represents the Old Persian word *gaushaka*: eavesdropper. (This can also be traced to Middle Persian *gosag*, spy; and to the modern Persian and Arabic *jasus*, equally meaning spy.)

It dovetails neatly with an observation that had been made already in 1877 by professor Keiper. He drew attention to the parallel function and position of Mithra – the Persian god of covenant—and the Persian High King: both were Judges, overseers of kingdoms, and both had spies who acted as their ‘eyes’ and ‘ears’.

In the Avesta, Mithra is called “Master of Ten Thousand spies”: *Baevare Spathano*. Mithra “cannot be deceived,” thanks to his *spaso* (=spies) who are repeatedly identified as his Eyes. So the title ‘Eye’ of the king would be *Spathaka* (=the one who sees), from the root *spas*, related to Latin *specio* (and to modern-day “spy”).

The High Kings Artaxerxes II and III consistently used their gold, sending secret agents to buy up leading politicians like the Athenian

demagogue Demosthenes, to keep their opponents at each other's throats. Given this frequent interference of Persian agents in the internal affairs of Greece, there can be no doubt that Alexander was perfectly aware of the activities of the Achaemenid secret service. In a famous letter to Darius III, written after the battle of Issos, he states: "My father was killed by assassins whom, as you openly boasted in your letters, you yourself hired to commit the crime". These letters, it is implied, were documents found at the royal quarters Darius had abandoned when fleeing from the battlefield.

As the assassins of Philip were Makedonians, their payment must have been transferred by secret agents. (Possibly they used the offices of Demosthenes, who made the mistake of announcing this regicide even before messengers could have arrived in Athens to confirm it).

After the conquest of Babylon, Susa and Persepolis, Alexander went to great lengths to be seen as the successor, not the destroyer, of the Achaemenid throne. He maintained all the formal institutions of the Persian empire and most of its administrative organisations. Even military units close to the High King, like the Persian *doryforoi* (a combination of bodyguards and General Staff officers), were not superseded by their equivalent Makedonian officers, but continued to exist side by side.

This makes it a near certainty that Alexander

also maintained the Persian intelligence organisation and its chief, the King's Eye, at his service. The highest ranking of these *doryforoi* was prince Oxyatres, the other son of the Persian queen-mother Sisygambis. However, after Alexander's death everything changed. The Spathaka disappeared from view with the demise of the Achaemenid empire during the Successor Wars.

But as soon as the Persians recovered their independence, the King's Eye returned with a vengeance. The Greco-Roman writers of that day had no doubt which office was meant. Filostratos of Athens (170-247 AD) speaks of a Parthian satrap who swiftly reported anything happening to the king, and terms him "a sort of Eye of the King, I imagine". He also refers to "the Ears of the King" as secret informers.

The Persian secret service directed by the Eye of the King became even more essential under the next, highly centralised dynasty, the Sassanids. A document survives in which the grand vizier of Ardasher rebuts a protest by a local ruler who said: "The King of Kings has appointed informers and spies over the people of the lands, and the subject people are afraid of this."

The answer proclaims: "This should not cause any fear at all in virtuous and sound people, for the King's Eye and the informers ... report with sincerity. If you are a worthy soul and obedient,

then so much the better when they inform the king of this, as his kindness to you will increase. And the King of Kings has written on this in detail in his Testament, that the king's ignorance or lack of information on people's conditions is a main source of corruption..."

In other words, under the Sassanids the King's Eye continued reporting on how the authorities discharged their duties. No doubt, the Spathaka always was one of the highest ranking men in the Persian empire. This reinforces the indications that, more often than not, the office was held by close relatives of the High King. Evidently, they had more powers than the satraps.

They were so effective that when Athens had its own little empire in the 5th century Delian League, it copied the institution by appointing high officials with the title of "Episkopos." The coincidences are remarkable. Both the King's Eye and the Episkopos are answerable only to the highest authority. They supervise the local rulers, take responsibility for taxation, and in case of troubles, they form a direct link to the central government. Their name may be similar as well. Epi-skopos (literally: "he who looks around," or overseer) is a Greek translation of Spathaka that remains close to the sound and meaning of the original Persian title.

It is rather ironic that today's church bishops owe their title –the Greek, and later Roman word



(e)piscop(us), garbled into ‘bishop’– to a Persian spy master.

## THE DEATH OF HEFAISTION

In October 324 BC, Alexander had accompanied Hefaistion to Ekbatana. They were organising a Games festival, when Hefaistion went down with fever. It seemed a perfectly normal case. Modern-day doctors have deduced from the symptoms, recorded by several historians, that it must have been a typhoid infection. Hefaistion was a strong man, usually in good health, so everybody – Alexander included – assumed he was healing when, after a week, the fevers began to abate.

That night, Alexander, instead of staying at his friend's bedside as he had been doing during most of the week, left the palace. He went next morning to the festival to hand out the prizes at the Boy's Games. But he was not the only one to leave Hefaistion alone. The Greek doctor, one Glaukias, also disappeared from the palace that night (later, he said he had gone to the theatre). When Hefaistion's condition worsened next morning, he was nowhere to be found.

The time the servants lost looking around for the doctor also meant they were late in sending a warning to Alexander. He crossed the city on horseback at breakneck speed, but even so arrived too late. In the bedroom of the palace he found his soul mate dead. Glaukias was finally brought in, could not give any coherent explanation, and was executed out of hand. That was a serious error of judgement, which confirms that sorrow had driven Alexander out of his mind.

He should have had Glaukias thoroughly interrogated. If it were true that he had left the palace to go to a theatre, that was an unpardonable error in a doctor. But there also is the suspicious fact of such a sudden worsening in Hefaistion's condition, that he died in the short time elapsed between a warning sent out, and Alexander crossing Ekbatana, not a big city. Such a lightning speed development in a 'normal' illness of a strong man might very well mean that he took a wrong medicine – or poison.

If Glaukias had remained at the palace, he could and should have prohibited his patient to take the breakfast –a boiled chicken and a bottle of wine, the servants reported– that accelerated the fatal disease. Modern day doctors say that, with the knowledge a medical man of Glaukias' standing had, he should have ordered his patient not to eat anything, but only to drink clean water.

Once the fever symptoms had become unequivocally those of a typhoid case, which he certainly would have recognised, Glaukias should have prohibited the palace servants to bring him any food. He did not, and that was either out of malpractice, or on purpose. For the breakfast erased all trace of the medicine (or poison) administered. Many sources note that poisoning was suspected.

Hefaistion had made many enemies among the Makedonians and Greeks in the course of his ascent to the top. Frictions with Krateros during the Indian campaign had even pushed them into a hand-to-hand combat, with their troops ready to come to the aid of their respective leaders. Alexander himself had to ride up to separate them. Plutarch says the king openly reproached Hefaistion, calling him “a madman if he did not realise that without Alexander he would be nothing” – but that he chided Krateros in private. This was not a man to be dishonoured before the Makedonian troops. After that, Alexander kept them consistently on separate missions.

Plutarch also mentions two different occasions on which Hefaistion quarrelled with Eumenes; the first time over the assignment of living quarters, the second involving a prize-giving. Alexander was angry with Hefaistion at first, but soon came to resent Eumenes. This, Plutarch explains, obliged Eumenes to deflect any suspicions that he rejoiced at Hefaistion’s death,

by proposing special posthumous honours for him.

## AFTER ALEXANDER

Arrian on the Successor Wars (*Ta Meta Alexandrou*, “The events after Alexander”), as abridged by Photius; translation by J.H. Freese:

“Arrian also wrote an account of what took place after Alexander’s death, in ten books. He describes the sedition in the army, the proclamation of Arridaios, the son of Alexander’s father Filippos, by a Thracian woman named Filinna, on condition that Roxane’s child, when born, if it were a son, should share the throne with him. Arridaios was then again proclaimed as joint king under the name of Filippos. <...>

Perdikkas became the object of general suspicion and himself suspected everybody. Nevertheless, he made appointments to the governorships of the different provinces, as if Arridaios had ordered him. Meanwhile, Roxane bore a son, who was immediately acclaimed king by the soldiers.

After the death of Alexander there were

numerous disturbances. Antipater carried on a war against the Athenians and the rest of the Greeks commanded by Leosthenes. <...> Krateros, by the assistance he rendered to Antipater against the Greeks, chiefly contributed to their defeat, after which they unhesitatingly obeyed Krateros and Antipater. This is the contents of the first five books.

The sixth book relates how <...> Perdikkas, intriguing against Antigonos, called him to judgment, but Antigonos, aware of the plot, refused to appear. This led to enmity between them. <...>

Soon afterwards, Cynnane was put to death by Perdikkas. This Cynnane was a daughter of Filippos the father of Alexander, her mother being Audata Eurydike. Cynnane brought her daughter Adea to Asia and offered her hand to Arridaios. The marriage subsequently took place, with the approval of Perdikkas, to appease the increasing indignation of the soldiery, which had been aroused by the death of Cynnane.

Antigonos, in the meantime, took refuge with Antipater and Krateros in Makedon and informed them of the intrigues of Perdikkas against him, declaring that they were directed against all alike. He also described the death of Cynnane in such exaggerated terms that he persuaded them to make war on Perdikkas. <...>

The body of Alexander was taken from Babylon by way of Damascus, contrary to the

wish of Perdikkas, to Ptolemy in Egypt. <...> Perdikkas, setting out from Damascus to make war first upon Ptolemy, reached Egypt with the co-kings and a large force. Notwithstanding the opposition of his troops, he decided to carry on the war. He was twice defeated, and, having treated those who were inclined to go over to Ptolemy with great severity, and in other respects behaved in camp more arrogantly than became a general, he was slain by his own cavalry during an engagement.

At a full council of war, Peithon and Arridaios having been appointed commanders-in-chief of all the forces for the time being, about fifty of the supporters of Eumenes and Alketas were condemned, chiefly because Krateros had met his death. <...>

Antipater made his own son Kassander chiliarch of the cavalry, while Antigonos received command of the forces which had formerly been under Perdikkas, <...> and, at his own request, the task of finishing the war against Eumenes. Antipater, having secured the approval of what he had done, returned home. With this the ninth book concludes.

The tenth book relates how Eumenes, having heard what had befallen Perdikkas, made all preparations for war; and <...> how Eumenes nearly came to blows with Antipater on his arrival at Sardès. But Kleopatra, Alexander's sister, to prevent the Makedonian people



accusing her of being the cause of the war, persuaded Eumenes to leave Sardès.

Notwithstanding, Antipater reviled her for her friendship with Eumenes and Perdikkas. She defended herself more vigorously than a woman could have been expected to do, brought countercharges against him, and in the end they parted amicably. <...>

Antipater, not yet daring to engage Eumenes, <...> appointed Antigonos to the command of the forces which had crossed over with him to Asia: 8500 Makedonian infantry, and the same number of foreign cavalry, together with half the elephants (that is, seventy) to assist him in ending the war against Eumenes.

Antipater wanted to return to Makedon with the co-kings and the rest of his forces, but the army again mutinied and demanded their pay. Having deceived the soldiers, Antipater crossed the Hellespont by night, with the co-kings, to Lysimachos. On the following day the soldiers also crossed, and for the moment made no further demand for their pay. With this the tenth book ends."

## THE *LIBER DE MORTE* PROPAGANDA

All historians agree that the various *Alexander Romances* were rewritten time and again to suit the propaganda themes of different patrons. But only in 1895 Professor Ausfeld noted that the final part of the Romance, a chapter titled *Liber de Morte* explaining Alexander's death and his last will, differs in too many stylistic details from the rest of the book. Also it had been preserved as a freestanding text in other ancient chronicles. So it must have been written by other authors and for other purposes. The experts have haggled over who and why for years, but now the consensus says that its author is Ptolemy, and the date around 309 BC.

Alexander's sons by Roxane and Barsine have been murdered: no direct heir to the throne can be produced any more. Ptolemy considers his moment has come. Anonymously, he publishes a fake Will of Alexander, with such a detailed account of Alexander's death that it could only

come from an eyewitness, to make the document more believable.

This account is a scathing condemnation for all Alexander's generals who are now Ptolemy's rivals. Never before have they been so publicly exposed as culprits in Alexander's death, or as criminal violators of Alexander's last will; or both.

Kassander and his father Antipater are shown to have organized the poisoning of the king. Everybody had already heard stories about the poisoning of Alexander. They started circulating immediately after his death. (In Athens, the politician Hypereides made the mistake of officially proposing honours to Kassander's brother Iollas for having administered the poison to Alexander. As soon as Alexander's governors regained control, they first had Hypereides' tongue cut off, and then killed him.)

But now, this document names all the participants in the conspiracy — all of them, Ptolemy's enemies. And it then goes on to detail how they have refused to obey Alexander's last wishes.

Kassander, the worst of them all, has killed Roxane and her son, whom Alexander in this will appoints as his successor. The document makes Alexander say Perdikkas should marry Roxane, which he did not; so he too was guilty. Other generals: Krateros, Lysimachos, Antigonos and Seleukos, or the secretary-turned-general

Eumenes, also have disobeyed various parts of the will. So they all (living or dead: by this time Perdikkas, Krateros and Eumenes have been killed already) are condemned.

Only Ptolemy has legitimacy. He has done all Alexander is said to have ordered, including the transport of his body to Egypt and the establishment of a priesthood to pay him divine honours. All, but for one detail: a state marriage.

The *Liber de Morte* makes a dying Alexander distribute the royal princesses of Makedon: his half-sisters Cynnane and Thessalonike, and his full sister Kleopatra. Krateros has to marry Cynnane, Lysimachos is to take Thessalonike. And Kleopatra is given to Ptolemy!

His rivals are guilty of not even trying. Krateros has ignored Cynnane, and permitted Antipater to keep her prisoner until she fled to Asia Minor, where she was murdered by Perdikkas. Princess Thessalonike has also been married against Alexander's purported wish: Kassander took her after proclaiming himself king in 316. (Antigonos immediately denounced him, saying he had forced Thessalonike.)

So this document means to show that Ptolemy is the only one who tries to comply with Alexander's dying wish: he asks Kleopatra to marry him. The so-called Will has been forged and circulated in 309 BC, as a propaganda pre-run for the political and military efforts Ptolemy will launch later that year. That is when he sends

his formal marriage proposal to Kleopatra.

Evidently, he wants to legitimise a political marriage to Kleopatra, and a war to reunite the whole empire again under their joint rule, through the ‘divine blessing’ of Alexander. A bit late, of course. Alexander’s purported Will is dated in 323, so 14 years have passed. Ptolemy must think he can argue that his rivals had sabotaged him by illegally imprisoning Kleopatra.

By 308, Ptolemy has occupied the whole Eastern seaboard of the Mediterranean, and Antigonos is far away in Babylon attacking Seleukos. Now Ptolemy personally leads an attack on Lykia in Asia Minor. Sardès is not too distant: if he can link up with Kleopatra, he will trump all his rivals. She has agreed to his scheme and tries to flee from Sardès to join him.

But Antigonos has left specific orders for this case. Kleopatra is dragged back to the palace in Sardès, and killed there in secret. Kleopatra’s and Ptolemy’s final attempt to conquer the whole of Alexander’s empire has failed. On the other hand, Antigonos’ supremacy does not last long either. Lysimachos and Seleukos –with some help from Ptolemy– destroy him at the battle of Ipsos in 301 BC.

Later, the allies slide into mutual propaganda warfare. Lysimachos, who owes his fame and riches to the long-past fact of having been Alexander’s *somatofylax* (bodyguard), gets furious when his enemies dub him *gazofylax* (treasurer: a

profession for eunuchs). He hits back by calling Seleukos *elefantarchès* ('elephant boss'). This is meant to rub in the disgrace that Seleukos has sold out Alexander's Indian conquests to king Chandragupta for 500 war elephants. At their final battle, near Sardès in 281 BC, Lysimachos is killed.

So in the end, of all Alexander's marshals, only Seleukos and Ptolemy have had sufficient staying power to leave their sons a kingdom.

## END OF THE EMPIRE

As the Successor Wars peter out from a chaotic all-against-all to a relatively stable situation, the empire splits into four Hellenic kingdoms (plus Parthia). Their chronology can be summarised as follows:

~~(2) Seleukids~~  
~~323-66 BC~~

1) The Ptolomies governed Egypt from Alexandria, which they made into the grandest city of the Ancient world, inviting over a hundred thousand Hellenes. They came from the Greek cities in Asia Minor, Greece, southern Italy and Sicily, willingly abandoning their old republican city-states to live and work under a powerful but benevolent monarch.

When Ptolemy I *Soter* (“the Saviour”) died in 283 BC, his realm stretched from the Nile Cataracts at modern-day Assuan, to the mountains of Lebanon. It included more than ten million subjects, and produced an annual tax

income of about 15,000 talents. Besides generous patronage for the arts at Alexandria's great Library and *Mouseion*, a high percentage of this revenue went to the military. The Ptolemies spent fortunes on a mercenary army and a technically very advanced navy – which however often proved incapable of assuring the dreamed triumphs.

2) Antigonos *One-Eye* with his son Demetrios won, and then lost, a vast empire centered on Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. Around 316 BC, this realm yielded him a revenue of some 11,000 talents per year. Later his financial possibilities became much more limited, as he went on losing territories.

Only his grandson, Antigonos Gonatas, obtained a stable dominion: Makedon itself, which he took from Kassander's successor. This allowed his dynasty to control central and northern Greece, plus most of the Aegean islands. With a small population –only a few million–, this kingdom, thanks to the strong military tradition of Makedon, still could measure up to the Ptolemies and the Seleukids.

3) Seleukos initially lost Babylon to Antigonos and had to take refuge with Ptolemy. Then, after helping him to beat off Antigonos at the battle of Gaza in 312 BC, Seleukos made a daring dash with few troops across the Western Desert to take



back 'his' city. Soon he controlled all Mesopotamia and western Persia. But in the east he could not prevent Chandragupta from taking over the Indian dominions.

After the battle of Ipsos in 301 BC, he added Syria and the southern part of Asia Minor to his holdings. Eying Greece, Seleukos moved the centre of his kingdom from Mesopotamia to the Syrian coast. His new capital of Antioch was destined to become, like Alexandria, one of the great cities of the Ancient world for nearly a millennium.

At his death (by murder) in 280 BC, his realm stretched from the Iranian deserts to the Hellespont. It comprised over fifty million subjects and could field an army of 80,000 men. Its tax revenue –no figures available as yet– was high but, because of the vast extension of the territory, its power could never be concentrated on one single campaign. And so in 247 BC the Seleukids lost Parthia. It became an independent eastern empire, heir to Achaemenid traditions, and –later–capable of fighting off Roman expansion towards Central Asia.

4) After 280 BC the Attalids in Pergamon made themselves independent from the Seleukid realm, but had to fight off their former overlords continually. For the first 70 years their saviour-allies were the Ptolemies; then, after 200 BC, they came to depend on the Romans. The last of

the Attalid kings willed his dominion to Rome in 133 BC.

The Successor Wars are over. The tattered and divided remains of Alexander's empire settle down for long centuries of cultural radiance, but short years of political independence. In the distance, the boots of the Roman legions are already heard thumping.

Makedon, attacked in 197, falls in 168 BC. The Seleukids are finished off by Pompeius in 66 BC, and in 47 BC Julius Caesar writes the final act. He conquers Egypt – but is conquered by Cleopatra VII. However, Rome does not tolerate this oriental *witch queen*: Julius is assassinated in 44 BC, and Cleopatra driven to suicide in 30 BC. Under Augustus a new, and very different, empire arises.



Julius Caesar's reverence for the Makedonian world-conqueror was legendary, and ensured that Alexander's glory would never be forgotten. At the frustratingly slow beginning of his own career, as a mere provincial officer in Spain, Caesar was seen in Cádiz –a Fenician colony– weeping before a statue of Alexander, envious of his youthful success. And when he had equalled his idol, finally adding Alexandria and the whole of Egypt's riches to his power base, Caesar

accompanied Cleopatra in a respectfully silent pilgrimage to the Alexander Tomb.

Augustus was more talkative when he came to pay homage to Alexander. He voiced the practical opinion that Alexander, instead of his endless victorious marches, should have taken some time to organize his empire better.

But that criticism did not diminish his admiration: for the greater part of his reign, Augustus used a signet ring with Alexander's image engraved on it, to seal his decrees. After all, his own good fortune derived from the untimely death of this conqueror. If Alexander the Great had lived to endow his vast dominions with a solid state apparatus, the Roman Empire would never have come to exist.

In his final year, Alexander was already planning a westward campaign. He controlled the Fenicians, and with them the seas. Soon, their former colony Carthago would have lost its independent power. Rome would then have been contained in Italy.

However, after Alexander's death, Perdikkas immediately convened the assembly of Makedonian voting soldiers. There, in order to limit the broad powers given to his rival Krateros, he had Alexander's so-called Final Plans repealed. This included the Arabian Expedition, that is, his strategy for the military and commercial domination of the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Professor Bosworth

underscores in his *Legacy of Alexander*:

“The vast project of naval construction, already underway in Kilikia, Fenicia and Cyprus, was cancelled, as was the proposed campaign against Carthago. Krateros had at his disposal arguably the most united force, over 10,000 Makedonian veterans, and controlled Kilikia and its treasures; it was the centre of the great military build-up which Alexander had commissioned in his last year.

The treasury of Cyinda was the principal receptacle of money, and vast sums were lodged there. As late as 315 BC, after six years of war in which Kilikia figured prominently, Antigonos *One-Eye* still was able to draw 10,000 talents from Cyinda alone. Much more would have been there for the taking in 323 BC.”

In 324 BC Alexander had begun to construct an enormous naval basin in Babylonia, holding over 1,000 ships. Via the Red Sea–Nile canal they could reach the Mediterranean, too. There, Krateros had written orders from Alexander, as Diodoros states, to build 1,000 warships larger

than triremes in Kilikia, Cyprus, and Fenicia, for a campaign against Carthago.

If Krateros had conquered Carthago –a foregone conclusion–, history would have taken a different course. Rome, locked in between a strong terrestrial army in Makedon, and the combined navies of Alexander's empire plus its vassals from Carthago, would have remained a simple local player in Italy.

But Krateros, with the empire's unity crumbling at his back in Babylon, and with a civil war on his hands in Greece and Asia Minor, never got to implement Alexander's western campaign. Worse, he was killed at a minor battle in Cappadocia in 321 BC.

Alexander's realm would never find back its reunited military power. And so Carthago could continue to build up its naval dominance in the Mediterranean – until it clashed with Rome, setting off the Punic Wars that opened the way to the Roman Empire, and Augustus.

## **CLEOPATRA VII, QUEEN AND PHARAOH**

The academic consensus is that Cleopatra VII preferred to kill herself, rather than permitting a victorious Augustus to exhibit her on the streets of Rome, loaded with chains and abused by the gloating spectators of his triumph over Egypt. But there is more to it than this consideration of personal pride.

Cleopatra was the conscious heir to millennia of pharaoh rule. And she was the mother of a crown prince of brilliant heritage: Caesar's bloodline, mixed with Alexander's! She had already associated Caesarion publicly to the throne, as shown on the walls of her Dendera temple. She could have followed the tradition of famous pharaohs of old, who in the face of an invading enemy had withdrawn up the Nile valley so that their heirs could reconquer Egypt in the future.

Evidently Cleopatra believed that, in spite of this option provided by pharaonic history, this time it could not be done. And she was better placed than anyone before –or after– her, to understand Rome, with her razor-sharp mind and her access to the best of all information sources: Julius Caesar himself.

In his last, most powerful period, Julius had asked her in July 46 BC to come and live with him in Rome. She already shared his most secret ambitions and his unrivalled knowledge. Now she also breathed Roman politics for the space of nearly two years. With the added benefit of Caesar's intimate insight in Augustus' character, and that of other Roman leaders.

Their opposition to her presence, as a politically active queen at Caesar's side, must have reminded her of the attitude of Alexander's Makedonian generals, rabidly against his vision of shared rule in Persia. They did not want an

‘integrated’ empire – much less, one where oriental women could be admitted to positions of power.

And Cleopatra VII was oriental, no doubt, in spite of her Ptolemaic/Greek provenance: half-Persian through her mother, a daughter of Mithridates the Great, and educated by Egyptian priests. She was fluent in at least seven oriental languages (Egyptian, Aramaic, Arabic, Hebrew, Syriac, Mede and Persian) besides Greek and later Latin. Curiously, the classical historians had commented on the same linguistic gift in her grandfather Mithridates, who was said to speak no less than 22 tongues.

There is a notable parallel between Stateira’s intended role as the oriental queen at Alexander’s side, and Cleopatra’s ambitions as the ruler of Egypt and mother of Caesar’s only son. Just like professor Carney remarked about the offspring of Alexander and Stateira, Julius had made Caesarion the future – a destiny to unite East and West, men and women, as equals.

Cleopatra had continued governing Egypt by herself, even from Caesar’s villa on the outskirts of Rome. In regional disputes she often sided with the women: a well documented case was her defense of Alexandra in Judea against king Herod, who enjoyed Roman support. (No wonder that Zenobia of Palmyra, another famous queen who went to war for her independence from Rome, would later claim descent from Cleopatra

VII.)

The right of women to be equal to men certainly formed part of the heritage she meant to pass on to Caesarion. She had fought desperately for it as a young princess. And she did so again after Julius' death, when she tried – through Mark Anthony– to salvage at least the eastern part of the world empire she and Caesar had been shaping. Mark Anthony indeed increased her Egyptian realm with several neighbouring territories, and was preparing the added conquest of Mesopotamia. But her initial success had given way to a fatal rout at the battle of Actium, when Augustus turned the full wrath of Rome against them.

Cleopatra, the shrewd queen who knew Augustus' plodding mind, would foresee he was sure to put an end to her line of succession. Egypt, downgraded to a mere Roman province! Did Cleopatra the pharaoh, whose rule was god-given and godlike, come to the conclusion that heaven refused to permit her –and Caesarion's– dreamed destiny?

Her last, tragic gesture was more than a suicide to avoid being taken by Rome. She decided to return the pharaoh's power to the gods. And for instrument she chose a snake's poison. The same snakebite that had given the goddess Isis her definitive magic powers, wielded for over 3,000 years to protect kingship in the valley of the Nile — the *snakepower* of the Great



Goddess.

**THE END**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Few people will ever be so lucky with their teachers as Alexander, who had Homer for passion, Philip for war, and Aristotle for peace. But mine gave me nearly as much reason for gratitude. From my college and university years I retain specially fond memories of my first teacher of Greek, Dr Corrie Scholten, who made me fall in love with the Ancient World. In recent years I delved more deeply into the era of Alexander the Great. And as I went discovering more –but also, more scattered–scraps of knowledge about his women than I had expected, I ran up another debt of gratitude.

First, to the authors of specialized studies whose books and articles opened up new perspectives on the Old World (see my list of [Reference Works](#)). And then, to several academic authorities who were so kind as to answer my many questions. For either or both reasons, I want to thank professors Amélie Kuhrt, Maria Brosius, Wouter Henkelman, Jan Tavernier and Elizabeth Carney; the latter also for her kind permission to reproduce her quotes on queen Olympias.

Of course, any mistakes about historical events or characters in this work are exclusively due to my shortcomings. Anyway, I have had a great time gathering the material for this book, and I hope it will result in some degree of reading pleasure for you who now have it in your hands.

Finally, I want to thank my friend José Peralta, a genius of the illustration arts – I wish I could compensate him for his generosity. And also, my friend Eduardo Aznar, in whose house this idea was born and who reviewed my drafts with saintly patience; in fact, he is a layman saint: *noblesse oblige*. Their help was priceless.

## NOTES ON SPELLING, AND MONEY

As for the eternally contentious matter of spelling ancient names, I am conscious of my unforgivable sins to the eyes of the purists. I was unable to find a single orthographical system that would correctly represent the name-words from all the different tongues spoken in Greece, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Central Asia, Egypt, etc.

Also, I cannot agree to the tradition of using Latin equivalents for these names. It feels like imposing Roman military discipline on the unruly brilliance of great cultures that had civilised humankind before Rome even existed. I want to carry my readers into the sounds and smells of the Hellenistic world that Alexander created – not the crude copy of Athens that the Roman Empire fancied later.

That is why I have followed Arrian's Greek renderings in nearly all cases. (Sometimes, also the Old-Persian spelling/variant is given.) This means that Greek names beginning with F or K are not, as is often done, rendered in the Romanised form beginning with Ph or C – but for the following exceptions:

- 1) to distinguish between Alexander's sister

Kleopatra and her namesake the pharaoh/queen of Egypt, the latter is written as Cleopatra, which is how Caesar made her world famous.

- 2) Alexander's half-sister Cynnane is mentioned with this Romanised version of her name, because it is better known to the public than her –real– Illyrian name Kunnanè.
- 3) For similar reasons, Alexandros is rendered as 'Alexander'; Filippos as 'Philip'; and Ptolemaios as 'Ptolemy'.

## MEASURES AND MONEY

To measure distance in Alexander's time, the basic unit was the Greek "stadion" which covers 185 meters.

As for money, the only monetary unit that could cause some confusion in this book is the 'talent', for this word has taken on a different meaning in our days. I have used this term with the meaning it had for Alexander: 26,2 kilos of silver. That was the maximum weight a man was able to carry on his shoulders, tradition said, during a full day's march.

Such a lump of precious metal was worth 6,000 *drachma* coins, or 60 *minas* accounting units. One drachma was the normal day pay for the common footsoldier. 30 drachma would be a monthly minimum wage. So, one talent equalled 200 months of basic salary: the pay of over 16 years!

Moreover, its purchasing power was higher than the figure you would find if you consulted today's market price of silver. In Alexander's times it was more scarce, and therefore more precious. I see that professor Green registers a clever formula to measure the value of a talent both then and now: it is what three specialist doctors get paid, between the three of them, in a

year.

In the Persian empire, the basic monetary unit since Darius the Great was the 'darik', a coin made of 8,4 grams of gold. The money changers of those days would give you 25 *drachma* coins for it. In other words, one silver talent equalled 240 golden dariks.

## PERSIA'S ASTOUNDING WEALTH

The vast wealth which Alexander found and put to use after his conquest of the empire, was the key to his lasting impact on the ancient world. He had set out poor and indebted, with an inheritance of less than 60 talents and debts of more than 1500. "And marching out from a country too poor to maintain you decently," as he reminded the Makedonians in his speech at Opis, "now all the wealth of Egypt flows into your hands; you are the masters of the gold of Lydia, the treasures of Persia, the riches of India..."

These dazzling riches were a product of Achaemenid rule. Darius the Great (521-486 BC) had revolutionized mankind's economic activity by establishing a common coinage for the whole empire, the darik. Coined money was an invention of the kingdom of Croesus which, conquered by Cyrus the Great in 547 BC, provided the example for Persia. But Darius' decision marked the first time in history that guaranteed money was introduced on such a

massive scale.

The existence of a universal means of exchange, the standardization of weights and measures and the codification of commercial laws, plus a secure road system, stimulated world trade even beyond his dominions. It elevated the Achaemenid empire to unrivalled prosperity.

Besides roads, Darius built ports, banking houses, and elaborate underground irrigation systems. He 'exported technology' to increase agricultural development in poorer zones of the empire. In the Western Desert, a Persian-style *qanat* system was discovered in 1992 at Ayn Manâwîr, near the Khargeh Oasis. A similar system was found to the North, in Khorasan.

This confirms the information given by Polybios (*History* X.28): "At the time when the Persians were the rulers of Asia, they gave to those who conveyed a supply of water to places previously unirrigated, the right of cultivating the land for five generations. People incurred great expense and trouble making long underground channels ..."

So, in exchange for their investment of money and labour, local communities obtained usufruct of the land brought under cultivation for five generations, about a century and a half. Polybios explicitly credits the Achaemenid kings with this policy. Besides broadening their tax base, it also underlined their desire to control the main transport routes like the Great Khorasan road and



the Western oasis route.

Moreover, Darius reopened the link from the Nile to the Red Sea, via the Bitter Lakes: a canal of 140 kms dating to pharaohs Senusset III, Hatshepsut and Ramses II. It was wide enough that two triremes could cross each other. Preparing the Suez Canal, Ferdinand de Lesseps found Darius' stele of 500 BC in Kabret, commemorating the (re)opening of the canal: "I commanded to dig this canal from a river by name of Nile which flows in Egypt....After this canal was dug, ships went from Egypt through this canal to Persia, thus as was my desire." In Alexander's days it was still usable, so the Arabian Fleet could reach the Mediterranean. Ptolemy II widened it in 250 BC, and the Roman emperors Trajan and Hadrian had it cleaned out again.

Darius also extended road networks across the empire, to enable both troops and information to move with startling speed. The most vital was the Royal Road that connected Susa to Sardès, a distance of 3200 km. An official message could travel its full distance in ten days. This road, first used only by royal messengers but later also for personal and business information (including price quotes for tradable goods), developed into the main communication nerve of the empire.

Major trade routes were connected to the Royal Road, with a similar one going down through Syria to the Mediterranean coast and

Egypt; and another leading east to India. In the end this system comprised over 10,000 km of secure all-weather roads.

Alexander accepted the fiscal system of the empire as he found it. During his campaigns – that is, until his return from India–, the tax revenues of the provinces were not vital to him. Empire-wide, they yielded an enormous sum: some 30,000 talents per year. He allowed the satraps to use these taxes for their standing armies in case local rebellions cropped up.

But this policy changed with his administrative overhaul in 325/324 BC, with ‘nation-wide’ policies taking priority. For example, an equivalent of more than \$ 200 million was deposited at the treasury of Kilikia in Asia Minor, to finance a westward expansion of the empire.

Persian taxation, tailored to each satrapy, demanded contributions from subject peoples – Persians and Medes paid no tax– that give a vivid picture of their economic potential. Babylon had to pay each year 1000 silver talents, a four-month supply of food for the army, and 500 eunuchs. India, clearly, was already fabled for its gold: the province was required to supply gold dust equal to 4680 silver talents. Egypt, then already known for the wealth of its crops, had to provide 120,000 measures of grain in addition to 700 talents of silver. Herodotos concludes

(*Histories*, book III) that Darius the Great received yearly tributes to a total of 380,800 kilos of silver.

The wealth of the Persian Empire is attested by the fact that Alexander concentrated at the Ekbatana treasury 180,000 talents, about 5 million kilos of silver. A truly colossal amount, representing the accumulated Persian bullion-reserves discovered at Sardès, Damascus, Babylon, Susa and Persepolis. Today its value would be over 5,200 million dollar – but remember that silver had more purchasing power then.

## **THE SOURCES FOR ALEXANDER: ARRIAN AND OTHERS**

Alexander's life has been used for centuries by all sorts of writers, each with their own interpretation. They created their own Alexander as a good (or bad) example for learning, or simply to entertain. In the East, that produced a thick book of legends known as the *Sikandar Nama, e Bara*. In the West, there were 'Alexander Romances' in many versions, and fiery disputes for and against Alexander.

The most biased sources were the Athens academics, bitterly anti-Alexander in the tradition of Demosthenes. Also they resented the fact that their fellow historian Kallisthenes, married to a niece of Aristoteles, had died a

prisoner. He was held to be an accomplice, to some degree, in a plot of several pages to murder Alexander in 327 BC.

Four centuries after Alexander's death there already was more legend and lie, than true history being told about him. That must have annoyed Arrian, and he decided to compose his own, much more factual, biography. Lucius Flavius Arrianus (85-162 AD) was quite a character. A Romanised Greek philosopher and general, and good at both.

He had studied under the famous philosopher Epiktetos, and one of his classroom companions was the future emperor Hadrian, who became Arrian's lifelong friend. Hadrian made him a Roman senator, consul, and governor of Cappadocia, where he put two Roman legions at his orders. There Arrian fought battles against invading tribes – descendants of peoples that Alexander had routed before. He knew what he was talking about, when he explained Alexander's activities as a military leader and as a statesman.

Arrian had the added advantage that in the libraries of his days (he was *archon*, mayor, of Athens in 145/6), he could still find books that are now lost. Like the first works published on Alexander's campaigns: the *Deeds of Alexander*, a hilariously praising biography covering the years 356-330 BC, written by Kallisthenes before he fell out with his king. Also, the 'Diaries' that

Alexander's secretary Eumenes kept, but falsified in part to use them as propaganda weapons against Antipater and Antigonos; like the so-called 'Correspondence of Alexander', now considered to be mostly fake.

Then there was a book by Diogenes' pupil Onesikritos, a helmsman of Alexander's flagship, who boasted that in 326 BC he had been the interpreter at Alexander's meeting with the Indian sages in Taxila. That was published in 319 BC, and shortly afterwards appeared a book by Alexander's chamberlain Chares about life at court. Also Alexander's friend and admiral, Nearchos, brought out his own account of the (sea) voyages of that campaign. Nearchos wrote this in part to dispute the exaggerated claims by Onesikritos about the role he had played in India.

Another of those early sources was a *History of the Successor Wars* written by Hieronymos of Kardia. He was a close friend or relative of Eumenes, and may have worked for him in Alexander's secretariat. It is certain that Hieronymos was a high-ranking official by the time of the Successor Wars. In 319 BC he acted as negotiator between Eumenes and Antigonos. After Eumenes' death he was employed by the governments of Antigonos, his son and his grandson.

Hieronimos lived to the grand old age of 104, and literary critics said that his books were 'too lengthy too'. But nobody disputed his firsthand

knowledge of the political and military events he wrote about. His *History* had the merit of including political analyses lacking elsewhere.

For example, Hieronymos was the only one who explained that Alexander had reinstated the Persian office of grand vizier solely for Hefaistion. But he did not use the Persian title for it, so Hefaistion acted as a prime minister but simply carried a military rank with the name of *chiliarch* (he was supreme commander of cavalry). In the wake of Hefaistion's demise, his military commands were divided between Perdikkas and Seleukos. Only after Alexander's death did Perdikkas gain his short-lived supremacy.

Arrian could also still buy the [*Stories*]*About Alexander*, which had been so popular in its own time that it might be called the bestseller of the year 310 BC. It had been written by Kleitarchos, son of the historian Deinon who had published a book about the Persian empire. The experts consider that Kleitarchos mainly copied and embellished the works of Kallisthenes and Onesikritos. Also, as Kleitarchos lived in Alexandria, he surely obtained information by interviewing veterans of the army there. Some of his most vivid stories are told from the point of view of the common soldier.

In his turn he was copied and 'interpreted' by Diodoros of Sicily (who moreover cited at length from Hieronymos), Plutarch, Curtius and Justin.

A later rip-off by an anonymous writer known as ‘the pseudo-Kallisthenes,’ around 220 AD, became the bestseller of the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, Arrian found books written by eyewitnesses: the memoirs of Ptolemy, Aristoboulos and Nearchos, about the years when they were a general, an engineer and an admiral in Alexander’s inner circle. Now these books are no longer extant.

With his own experience, Arrian was capable of judging all of them on their merits. He considered Kallisthenes self-serving and untrustworthy, and Kleitarchos a sensationalist — with all authors of their school, called the ‘Vulgate’, equally biased. Reading Diodoros and Curtius, or the later version by Justin, it is easy to see why. They were writers who did not let the truth stand in the way of a juicy story.

It is not known why Arrian decided not to use Hieronymos, who seems to have been a rather neutral informant, not notably biased in favor of, or against Alexander. But his close relation with Eumenes might have made him suspect. So in the end, Arrian based his biography mostly on Ptolemy, Aristoboulos and Nearchos.

Plutarch of Chaironea (45-120 AD), who wrote one generation earlier than Arrian, drew on an even wider variety of sources, and loved to show that off. For example, in his annotation about Alexander and the Amazons in *Alexander*,

46, 1–6 (time and place are 330 BC, in North-West Persia):

“Alexander routed an army of the Scythians, and after having crossed the Orexartes river he received the visit of the queen of the Amazons. A visit that is recorded in most writers, such as Kleitarchos, Polykleitos, Onesikritos, Antigenes and Ister. But Aristoboulos and Chares the Chamberlain are joined by Hekataeus of Eritria, Ptolemy, Antiklides, Filon of Thebes, Filippos of Theangela, Filippos of Calchis and Duris of Samos in claiming that this visit is a fiction.”

Arrian disparages this myth, saying he does not believe Amazons ever existed. In the tradition of the oriental ‘Alexander Romances’, however, the Amazons and other legends would live on for centuries. In the 12th-century Persian Romance *Darab-Nama*, Alexander fights against, but finally marries, a woman warrior with goddesslike powers. The theme strives to mix Hellenistic elements (Hippolyta, Penthesileia) and Old-Persian traditions (the heroine symbolises the goddess Anahita, and is the one who officially proclaims him King of Persia) - but within a Muslim culture, for together they conquer India to spread Islam there.



## THE ORIENTAL SOURCES

The various oriental Alexander romances had been ‘canonized’ by one of the greatest Persian poets, Abu Muhammad bin Yusuf. Under his pen name Nizami Ganjavi, he published this work in 1203 AD, dedicated to his king in Tabriz. It is usually called the *Sikandar-Nama*.

Nizami needed all 216 couplets of Chant 64 to present the Auspicious Horseman as a brave warrior, and then to reveal him as a woman. “In battle, his helmet fell down from his head; a spring-blooming face appeared beneath the helmet, much more beautiful and tender than the tulip-leaf”. Another 170 couplets in Chant 67 describe the Amazon’s seduction of Alexander, and their love-night together.

For an abridged quote to taste the flavour of this elaborate poem, we begin at verse 62 of Chant 67, “Sikandar’s Toying with the Damsel given by the Khan of Chin(a)”. She is speaking:

“The King seized the world’s throne — Oh wonder!

I captivated him, Sikandar, who captured the world.

If he cast an arrow by the power of his army,  
mine is a glance of eye, arrow-casting.

If he brings a heavy mace of gold on his  
shoulder,

my two locks about the ear are two maces.

If through pre-excellence he became

sovereign of the world,  
by soul-cherishing I am sovereign of the  
lovely ones!

When I cast up my veil from my face,  
I purchase the world for a single hair of  
mine.

...

Him I fascinate by remedy: union,  
and consume with pain: separation.

She am I who does this;  
save me, no one did this!

...

Of the door of chastity of my hidden garden,  
no-one save the gardener Sikandar knows  
the key.

When I reveal the grace of my limbs,  
I render defective the brain.

A little of the sorcery of my eyes reached  
Babylon,  
from which issue these magic arts.

...

By giving a particle of perfume from my  
tress,

I take tribute: place the wax-seal with the  
sovereignty of Chin;  
strike five drums for the plunder of Rum [the  
empire of the West].

...

On that I am intent, that I may employ song;  
may draw him, Sikandar, like my harp, into  
my bosom;

may sometimes give a kiss to his intoxicated  
eye;  
may sometimes give my tress into his hand.”

...

<Nizami concludes:>

“The King, through love of that sweet and  
graceful one,  
came like a white falcon to that young  
partridge, the Damsel.  
A night of privacy and a beauteous one like  
that!  
From her, how can one draw the rein?

...

The two lovers became two jewels of coral,  
and dashed the two particles of one kind  
together.

When the ruby pierced the unpierced gem,  
the gem indeed rested, and the ruby indeed  
slept.

At that fountain of life,  
Sikandar enjoyed much happiness and  
joyousness.”

(Translation: H. Wilberforce Clarke)

Nizami wrote his epic in two parts. Only the  
first one, also known as the *Shah-Nama*, has been  
translated into English, by H. Wilberforce Clarke.  
In his 840-page edition of 1880, the Amazon  
story occupies no less than 40 pages.

It has been demonstrated that the *Sikandar-  
Nama* and the earlier oriental tales about

Alexander's exploits, also found in Firdausi's *Shah-Nama* (1010 AD), are heavily indebted to translations of the text of the pseudo-Kallisthenes. They all transmit such typical 'pseudo-Kallisthenes mistakes' as making Roxane a daughter of the Persian High King Darius. But Nizami corrects some of its errors, so he must have drawn on other classical sources too.

On Alexander's origins, Firdausi contradicts even himself. In his epic on the succession of Persia's mythical and historical kings, he first describes Alexander as a Persian prince of the Kiyani branch, with legitimate rights to the 'Divine Glory' of a High King. But later, when the epic has moved on to the era of the Sassanid rulers, Firdausi follows another tradition, with a ferocious condemnation of Alexander as Persia's enemy. Here he depicts him as a usurper, and the culprit of the physical destruction of the sacred *taqdis*, the mythological throne of the Persian High Kings.

Curiously, Firdausi's doublethink about Alexander has endured into the present age. For example, we read this lament in a recently published *Persian Myths*, by the Iranian author Vesta Sarkhosh:

"It is surprising, though not impossible to explain, that this foreign conqueror could be acclaimed as a great man by his friends. Though a usurper, Alexander actually became known in Persian

literature and history chronicles as a great philosopher and statesman. Only very sparsely there are descriptions of the negative aspects of his character or his bad deeds; like the destruction of the mythological Persian throne, and the burning of the Avesta, which the 10th century historian Tabari considered 'one of the most depraved acts ever committed'.

In spite of everything, Alexander was accepted in Iran's national epics as a true hero and a legitimate heir to the throne. That legitimacy must have come about as a result of political necessity, because only sovereigns with genuine rights to the Royal Glory were elected to reign over Iran. For a foreign usurper there would be no place in the history of the nation; so in order to legitimise Alexander, the *Shah-Nama* considers him as a half-brother of the last Achaemenid king."

Nizami keeps closer to the historical truth of Alexander's biography, beginning the *Sikandar-Nama* at his birth in Greece, and then relating his conquest of the world (though he ends this part with a myth of Alexander returning to Greece). He rejects the embroidered versions in Firdausi,

where Alexander is given either a divine birth or a convoluted fathering by Darius, and simply states he was the son of the Greek king Philip II.

The second part of Nizami's epic, usually known as the *Iqbal-Nama*, elevates Alexander above world-conqueror status, to prophet and philosopher. The text describes his erudite relations with wise men and scientists. But at the end of this book, trying to come back to biographical style, Nizami stumbles again into the 'pseudo-Kallisthenes' tradition.

Here, he transmits Alexander's fake Last Will, known in the West as the *Liber de Morte*. This is a typical propaganda theme to please all sorts of rulers who glorify themselves as descendants of the heroes among whom Alexander himself, according to this 'testament', had distributed his realm. Faked history to legitimise the kingdoms that these warlords had carved out for themselves from different parts of the empire.

## ALEXANDER THE *DHU-'L-QARNAIN*, IN THE KORAN

The reason why Nizami sees fit to elevate Alexander to 'prophet' status is that his fame has given him the ultimate triumph in the Islamic world: he is canonised in the Holy Koran. The 18th Sura, verses 82-102, has prophet Muhammad answering a question on *Dhu'l-Qarnain* (literally: 'the Two-Horned'). He states

that Allah himself let it be known that “Verily, we made him powerful in the earth, and gave him means to accomplish everything he pleased. And *Dhu’l-Qarnain* said: “This is a mercy from my Lord’.” (Then the Two-Horned One goes on to praise Allah’s mercy, and to threaten all unbelievers with hell).

Modern exegesis explains that the sanctified words of Allah’s prophet were prompted by questions of unbelievers in Mecca, and that there is no doubt he was referring to the historical Alexander the Great. This means that, in 7th century Mecca, both the unbelievers and Muhammad’s followers still were avid readers of Arab translations of the old tales about the Two-Horned world-conqueror.

The prophet Muhammad himself also was a warrior leader. So his God-given approval for Alexander/Iskander as a ruler “powerful in the earth” elevated him to the status of a perfect forebear for new conquering dynasties in the Islamic world. Its effects reached out to its furthest frontiers.

Nearly two thousand years after Alexander’s death, new Islamic kings on the Indonesian island of Sumatra elaborated just such a theory to legitimise their rule. They assured that the *Dhu’l-Qarnain* himself had sent one of his sons to continue his dynasty in this part of the world. And so, when the warrior kingdom of Aceh, on the northern tip of Sumatra, was at the peak of

its power and wealth around 1620 AD, its brilliant and ruthless sultan had himself proclaimed as 'Iskandar Muda', that is, "the Young Alexander."

Nizami offers various explanations about the nickname of *Dhu'l-Qarnain*, as it has become a title fit to be mentioned in the Holy Koran. One is to describe Alexander as a famous 'world-traveller', through an etymology of the Arab word *qarn* as "the sun's upper border when it rises above the horizon". So this 'double rising sun' would mean that Alexander had seen the sun rise both in West and East.

A second etymology explains *qarn* as equivalent of "generation", so it would make Alexander 'a hero who lived through two generations'. A third etymology translates *qarn* as "hair lock," and here Nizami has a funny story of Alexander trying to hide his too big ears under his hair.

The fourth etymology correctly identifies *qarn* as "horn," and goes on to explain that "The Two-Horned" meant (although Nizami does not specify why) that Alexander was protected by the ancient gods.

The "Two-Horned" nickname allows Nizami to tell the following fable: "Alexander was ashamed of his big ears, and hid them under his golden crown. Only the slave who was his barber knew the secret, but when the slave died a



successor had to be appointed. When the new barber arrived, the king warned him first of all he would have to keep the secret of the too-big ears. If not, Alexander would tear his ears off him and have him killed. The new slave, totally terrified, lost the power of speech. The burden of the secret made him sick, and so one day he left the palace, went out into the countryside and found a profound well-hole. He stuck his head inside and screamed out the secret of the king's big ears. That eased his mind, and he returned to palace.

But from the well, a bamboo-stalk containing the secret grew up and up. A shepherd passing by cut the stalk to make a flute; and one day, Alexander walking about in the countryside heard a shepherd's flute performing a song about his too-big ears. Deducing that his barber slave had revealed the secret, he interrogated him. The slave, though knowing his life was at stake, explained the truth: unable to carry the burden of the secret alone, he had sought out the safest place –so he thought– to scream it into.

Alexander then pardoned the slave, because he understood the lesson that, in the end, all secrets end up being exposed.”

## **THE SOURCE OF THE *ALEXANDER ROMANCE***

These oriental *Alexander Romances* were derived, like their Western counterparts, from a Greek source in Alexandria now known as ‘the

pseudo-Kallisthenes'. He achieved one of the strangest success stories in world literature.

Scholars qualify him as a rather ignorant scribe, who tried to profit from a renewed Alexander-rage in the reigns of the Roman emperors Caracalla (211-217) and Alexander Severus (222-235). Living around that time in Alexandria, the scribe composed a patchwork with various texts he had found: an ancient biography –probably a bastard child of Kleitarchos, who had also lived in this city–; a series of forged letters between Alexander, Olympias and other protagonists, that circulated under the last Ptolemies; and the faked Last Will now known as the *Liber de Morte*.

He also quoted a letter supposedly written by Darius' mother and daughter to thank Alexander for his chivalrous treatment:

“Greetings to King Alexander! We implore the Gods in heaven, who have thrown down the name of Darius and the glory of the Persians, that they designate you as the lasting king of the civilised universe; and that you may distinguish yourself by your reasons, your prudence and your power.

We know very well that in your arms we will live with dignity, as you never abused of us as your prisoners. We implore the heavens above to give you

happy times and innumerable years of power. Your deeds testify to your highest birth. Now, we will no longer live as prisoners of war, and we know that in Alexander we have a new Darius. We prostrate ourselves with reverence before Alexander, who will not submit us to outrages.

And we have written to everywhere: 'Peoples of Persia, know that at the moment of his death, Darius found in Alexander a magnificent king. Fortune now makes Roxane marry Alexander, the King of the whole universe. You all should behave towards Alexander in accordance with his benevolence, because the glory of the Persians is now arising again. Be happy, like we are, in acclaiming Alexander as the greatest of all Kings'. This is what we have openly told the Persians.

We send you our best greetings."

Another noteworthy passage in the pseudo-Kallisthenes describes an attempt by queen-mother Sisygambis to broker an agreement between her firstborn Darius and her newfound son Alexander, in order to avoid further

bloodshed. Sisygambis is on record here as having written a secret letter.

The story tells correctly that the High King, after the last pitched battle he has lost “on the shores of the Tigris”, flees into Northeast Persia. But he goes on sending orders to his satraps and vassals to levy a new army. Then, the pseudo-Kallisthenes continues:

“As the mother of Darius heard about these events, she sent him a secret message which she had written as follows: ‘I greet my son Darius. I have heard you are gathering many men with the intention to make war again on Alexander. Do not put the universe upside down, my son, for the future is uncertain. So you should rather leave your expectations for a better occasion; do not put to risk your life, by forcing such an ambiguous situation.

As about us, we are receiving the highest honours as we are in the power of king Alexander. And he did not make me prisoner as the mother of his enemy, but has given me a respectable personal guard. Therefore I trust that you both can arrive at a good compromise’.”

So from some earlier source, the Alexandrian

scribbler has picked up that the Persian queen-mother had the means (which he does not explain) to write and send letters in secret. Plus, that she had sufficient political experience and status to counsel the High King on such state matters as negotiations over a possible agreement with Alexander, and trusts her proposals will be attended to.

Centuries later, in the Byzantine Empire, an ignorant patriarch confounded this author with Alexander's official historian Kallisthenes. Through lack of a better description, the nickname of pseudo-Kallisthenes would stick. Not because of their literary or historical qualities, but on the wings of Alexander's fame, the scribbings of this pseudo-Kallisthenes spread wide and far.

They were copied and translated, often in mangled forms, into some seventy versions and dozens of languages. The first was a translation into Latin by Julius Valerius, consul in 338 AD; followed by versions in Syriac, Pahlevi Persian, Hebrew, Georgian, Armenian (5th century), Turkish, Arab, Coptic, and Ethiopic. After a 'remake' in the Vulgar Latin of the 10th century, there flourished a new spate of manuscript copies in Romanic and other European languages: Italian, French, Spanish, German, English, Swedish, Polish, Hungarian, Rumanian, Serb, Bulgarian, and Russian. Meanwhile, via India, the tales had also found their way into Siamese,

Malay, and Javanese.

Until the advent of the Gutenberg press, no other text –apart from the Bible– was more widely reproduced than these *Life and Deeds of Alexander*. The last popular editions were still reprinted in Venice in the 19th century.

**IN ALEXANDER'S OWN WORDS <as quoted  
by Arrian: >**

Alexander's letter from Tyre, to Darius III  
(*Anabasis* II.14.4–8):

“Your ancestors invaded Makedon and Greece and caused havoc in our country, though we had done nothing to provoke them. As supreme commander of all Greece I invaded Asia because I wished to punish Persia for this act - an act which must be laid wholly to your charge. You sent aid to the people of Perinthos in their rebellion against my father; Ochus sent an army into Thrace, which was a part of our dominions; my father was killed by assassins whom, as you openly boasted in your letters, you yourself hired to commit the crime; <...> then I took the field against you; but it was you who began the quarrel. First I defeated in battle your generals and satraps; now I have defeated yourself and the army you led.

By the Gods' help, I am master of your

country, and I have made myself responsible for the survivors of your army who fled to me for refuge: far from being detained by force, they are serving of their own free will under my command. Come to me, therefore, as you would come to the Lord of the continent of Asia. Should you fear to suffer any indignity at my hands, then send some of your friends and I will give them the proper guarantees. Come then, and ask me for your mother, your wife, and your children and anything else you please; for you shall have them, and whatever besides you can persuade me to give you.”

Alexander at the mutiny in Opis (*Anabasis* VII.9–10):

“In August 324, on arriving at Opis, Alexander called together the Makedonians and declared that he was discharging from the campaign and sending back to their country all those who were unfit for service because of age or wounds suffered. The presents he would give would make them an object of even greater envy at home and would encourage the other Makedonians to take part in the same dangers and hardships.

Alexander spoke these words with the clear intention of pleasing the Makedonians, but they felt Alexander now despised them. It was not unreasonable for them to take exception to

Alexander's words, and they had had many grievances throughout the expedition. There was the recurring annoyance of Alexander's Persian dress which pointed in the same direction, and the training of the barbarian 'Successors' in the Makedonian style of warfare, and the introduction of foreign cavalry into the squadrons of the Companions.

They could not keep quiet any longer, but all shouted to Alexander to discharge them from service and "take his father on the expedition"; by this insult, they meant Ammon. When Alexander heard this, he spoke as follows:

"Makedonians, my speech will not be aimed at stopping your urge to return home; as far as I am concerned you may go where you like. But I want you to realize on departing what I have done for you, and what you have done for me.

<...>

I inherited a handful of golden and silver cups, coin in the treasury worth less than sixty talents, and over eight times that amount of debts; yet to add to this burden I borrowed a further sum of 800 talents. And marching out from a country too poor to maintain you decently, I laid open for you at a blow the gates of the Hellespont, although at that time the Persians controlled the sea.

My cavalry attacks crushed the satraps of Darius, and I added all Ionia and Aiolia, the two Frygias and Lydia to your empire. Miletos I



reduced by siege; the other towns all yielded of their own free will – I took them and gave them to you for your profit and enjoyment.

All the wealth of Egypt and Cyrene, which I shed no blood to win, now flows into your hands; Palestine and the plains of Syria and the Land between the Rivers are now your property; Babylon and Bactria and Susa are yours, you are the masters of the gold of Lydia, the treasures of Persia, the riches of India – yes, and of the sea beyond India, too.

You are my captains, my generals, my governors of provinces. As for me, what do I have left from all these labours? Merely this purple cloak and a diadem. I kept nothing for my own; no one can point to treasure of mine alone, kept apart from which you yourself either possess, or have in safe keeping for your future use. Indeed, what reason have I to keep anything, as I eat the same food and take the same sleep as you do?”

<...>

“Over every land and sea, across river, mountain and plain I led you to the world’s end, a victorious army. I have married as you married, and many of you will have children related by blood to my own.”

<...>

“And now it was in my mind to dismiss any man no longer fit for active service – all such should return home to be envied and admired. But you all wish to leave me.

Go then! And when you reach home, tell them that Alexander your King, who vanquished the Persians and Medes and Bactrians and Sacae; who crushed the Uxians, the Arachosians, and the Drangae, and added to the empire Parthia, the Chorasmian desert, and Hyrcania to the Caspian Sea; who crossed the Caucasus beyond the Caspian Gates, and the Oxus and the Tanais and the Indus, which none but Dionysios had crossed before, and the Hydaspes and the Acines and the Hydraotes – yes, and the Hyfasis too, had you not feared to follow; who by both mouths of the Indus burst into the Great Sea beyond, and traversed the desert of Gadrosia, untrodden before by any army; who made Carmania his own, as his troops swept by, and the country of the Oreitians; who was brought back by you to Susa, when our ships sailed the ocean from India to Persia – tell them, I say, that you deserted him and left him to the mercy of barbarian men, whom you yourselves had conquered. Such news will indeed assure you praise upon earth and reward in heaven. Out of my sight!”

When he had finished, Alexander leaped down from the platform, retired to the royal tent and neglected his bodily needs. For that day and the day after he would not let any of his Companions see him.

On the third day he invited inside the elite of the Persians, appointed them to the command of all the squadrons, and only allowed those who

received the title of 'kinsmen' from him to kiss him.

As for the Makedonians, they were at first struck dumb by his speech and waited for him near the platform. No one followed the departing king, apart from the Companions around him and the bodyguards, but the majority was unable to decide what to do or say or to make up their minds to go away. When they were told what was happening with the Persians and Medes, that the command was being given to Persians and the oriental army was being divided into companies, that Makedonian names were being given to them, and there was a Persian squadron and Persian footcompanions and other infantry and a Persian regiment of Silver Shields, and a Companion cavalry together with another royal squadron, they could not endure it any longer.

They ran in a body to the royal tent, cast their weapons down in front of the doors as a sign of supplication to the king, and standing before the doors shouted to the king to come out. They were prepared to hand over those responsible for the present disturbance and those who had raised the outcry. They would not move from the doors by day or night until Alexander took pity on them.

He celebrated the occasion by sacrificing to the gods he normally sacrificed to, and offering a public banquet. He sat down and so did everyone else, the Makedonians around him, the Persians

next to them, then any of the other peoples who enjoyed precedence for their reputation or some other quality. Then he and those around him drew wine from the same bowl and poured the same libations, beginning with the Greek seers and the Magians. He prayed for the blessings and for harmony and partnership in rule between Makedonians and Persians. It is said that there were 9,000 guests at the banquet, who all poured the same libation and then sang the song of victory.”

## THE CLASSICAL SOURCES ON ALEXANDER'S ERA:

Lost works appear in *cursive red*

1) EYE-WITNESSES, BY ORDER OF  
PUBLISHING DATE:

—Aristoteles of Stágira, 384-322 BC, the great philosopher/biologist, son of Philip's physician. Though he wrote numerous works, only two so far are known to relate to Alexander: the volumes called *Politics* (as it mentions, without background explanation, the murder of Philip); and *About the Cosmos* (as it is dedicated to “to the best of all Hegemons”, that is, to Alexander in 335 BC).

—Kallisthenes of Olynthos, 370-327 BC, a snobbish intellectual married to a niece of Aristoteles; on the campaign trail he composed *Alexander's Deeds*, published in installments from 334 to 327 in Greece for evident propaganda purposes.

—Antipater of Palioura, 397-319 BC; Regent of Makedon; friend of Philip and Aristoteles. He

wrote about the wars against Illyria, and left behind two volumes of *Correspondence*.

—Eumenes of Kardia 362-316 BC; Royal Secretary, later turned general; published –but also falsified in part, for propaganda reasons– *Efemerides* (Diaries) on the campaigns, and left some volumes of *Correspondence*.

—Onesikritos of Astypalaia, 380-305 BC, a helmsman with philosophical pretenses; he published his *Memoirs* soon after 319 BC.

—Chares of Mytilene, 367-313 BC, protocol chief; published a (*Stories*) *About Alexander* containing court anecdotes.

—Nearchos of Kreta, c. 360-300 BC; as a close (youth) friend and later admiral of Alexander's, he always accompanied him; around 310 BC (and in part, to decry Onesikritos) he published his own *Memoirs*.

—Aristoboulos of Kassandreia, 380-295 BC, chief engineer for Alexander, published his *Memoirs* around 300 BC.

—Ptolemy I Soter of Makedon, 367-283 BC; a close friend, maybe even half-brother of Alexander's, he became one of his marshals with the title of Bodyguard ('Somatofylax'). Ruler of Egypt from 323 and Pharaoh from 305, he published his *Memoirs* about 285 BC.

—Hieronimos of Kardia, c. 355-250 BC, an educated gentleman, worked for Alexander's secretariat and, later, at the service of Antigonos One-Eye and his dynasty. About 265 BC he

published his *History of the Successor Wars*.

## 2) HISTORIANS WHOSE WORKS DERIVE FROM THESE EYE-WITNESSES:

A: in a literary style called vulgar, or 'Vulgate':

—Kleitarchos of Alexandria, c. 330-280 BC, son of the historian Deinon who had written about Persia; moving in intellectual circles of Ptolemy's court, Kleitarchos published his *About Alexander* between 310 and 301 BC. His main sources were Kallisthenes, Onesikritos, Nearchos, and the veterans of the campaigns he found in Alexandria. Possibly he also read some volumes of Eumenes, but these would be rather contaminated copies. He could not use the memoirs of Ptolemy that appeared later. Afterwards, Kleitarchos was used in the original version by Diodoros, and in a second-hand mode (plagiarised by Timagenes of Alexandria, source of Trogus) by Curtius. The text of Kleitarchos on Alexander is the starting point of the literary style called "Vulgate".

—Duris, tyrant of Samos, c. 350-270 BC; his *Makedonika* covered the period 370-281 BC until the triumph of Seleukos over Lysimachos at the battle of Corruptedion/Sardès.

B: in the first 'professional' style history/

biography:

—Mestrios Ploutarchos, Plutarch of Chaironea, c 45-120 AD; author of the *Parallel Lives* that include a biography of Alexander, and of the *Moralia* and other works, that contribute further data. Among his sources, Plutarch mentions a Correspondence that must have been authentic at least in part (from Antipater and/or Eumenes?); and he gives the names of 24 historians that had already published works on Alexander.

—Arrianus, Lucius Flavius, of Nikomedia in Asia Minor, 85-162 AD; a Romanised Greek student of philosophy under Epiktetos, together with Hadrian who (as emperor) made him a general, and consul in 129; imperial governor of Cappadocia in 131-137, when he beat back an invasion by the Alan tribes, descendants of the Scythians that Alexander had warred with. In 145/46, Arrian was mayor of Athens. He describes his fight against the Alans in *Ektaxis kata Alanoon*. His main work is the history of Alexander's life and campaigns, *Anabasis Alexandrou*, using as sources the eyewitness accounts of Ptolemy, Aristoboulos and Nearchos. He also published a report on India called *Indikè*.

### 3) WORKS BASED ON 'VULGATE' SOURCES:

—Diodoros, c. 100-20 BC, a historian from Agyrium on Sicily who had travelled extensively



through Europe, Egypt and Asia, from 40 BC onwards published a *Historical Library*. For its volume on Alexander, his main source was Kleitarchos, with additional data taken from Hieronymos and Duris.

—Trogus Pompeius, a Romanised Gaul, around 10 BC published his *Historiae Philippicae*; two of its 44 volumes concerned Alexander, and were based on a second-hand version of Kleitarchos. Trogus was used in turn by Curtius, and later ineptly abridged by Justin. Some fragments of the original text are preserved in Valerius Maximus and in the Metz Epitome.

—Curtius, Quintus C. Rufus, 10 BC - 53 AD, a prominent Roman author, in the days of emperor Claudius published a *Historiae Alexandri Magni*: an indirect heir to Kleitarchos through Diodoros, with some parts of Trogus mixed in.

—Justinus, Marcus Julianus, a Roman writer, around 300 AD published his 'Epitome' of Trogus, a badly edited digest; its only merit was to preserve a part of the contents.

—the Metz Epitome: *Epitoma Rerum Gestarum Alexandri et Liber de Morte Eius*, a manuscript in late Latin (found back at Metz) written in the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century AD as a digest of several earlier texts. Some parts derive from Duris and Diodoros, but most of its material is similar to Trogus and Curtius. However, it also preserves a few details that cannot be found in any other source on Alexander.

#### 4) THE *ALEXANDER ROMANCE*, A 'VULGATE' FRENZY:

—the so called 'pseudo-Kallisthenes', an anonymous Greek scribe in Alexandria, published around 220 AD his bestseller *Life and Deeds of Alexander*, with many a phantasy mixed in.

—Julius Valerius, Roman consul in 338 AD, translated this text into Latin under the title *Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis*, which became the origin of over 70 'remakes' in Occidental and Oriental literature, generally known as *the Alexander Romances*.

#### 5) PROFESSIONAL HISTORIANS ON THE ALEXANDER ERA:

—Berossos (in Chaldean: Bel-re'ushunu) of Babylon, emigrated to Asia Minor, where he wrote in Greek; of his 3-volume *Babyloniaka*, published c. 285 BC, only a few fragments survive, referring to events of the period 600-300 BC.

—Memnon, of Herakleia Pontos in Asia Minor, limited himself to local history of his region in the period 365-70 BC; a few fragments survive.

—Fylarchos, of Athens, published a *Historia* covering 272-220 BC.

—Polybios, of Megalopolis, 203-118; his

*Historia* covers 230-145 BC.

## 6) OTHER REFERENCE WORKS BY PROFESSIONAL WRITERS:

—Strabo of Amasya, c. 64 BC - 24 AD:  
*Geography*

—Pliny ‘the Elder’, Gaius Plinius, 23-79 AD:  
*Natural History*

—Appianus of Alexandria, 95-165 AD: *The Mithridatic Wars*

—Polyainos of Bithynia, born c.100 AD:  
*Strategy*

—Pausanias ‘the Traveller’, 115-180 AD:  
*Description of Greece*

—Cassius Dio, 164-235 AD, consul in 229 AD:  
*Historiae Romanae*

—Filostratos of Athens, 170-247 AD: *Life of Apolonius* (with a reference to Parthia)

## 7) ABRIDGERS WHO PRESERVE INTERESTING FRAGMENTS:

—Valerius Maximus quotes from Trogus in his *Factorum et Dictorum Memorabilium*, c. 25 AD.

—Athenaios, of Naukratis in Egypt, c.140-200 AD, quotes from many other authors in his *Deipnosophistai* (“Gastromy and table-talk”).

—Aelianus, Claudius, c.175-235 AD quotes from many now-lost works in his *Varia Historia*.

—Photius, 820-897 AD, patriarch of Constantinople; his *Myriobiblion* also contains digests of 280 classical writers, and so preserves important fragments of historians like Ktesias, Diodoros, Arrian, or Memnon of Herakleia.

—The historical encyclopedia known as *the Suda* (10th cent. AD) has over 32.000 entries and can be read in English translation at [www.stoa.org/sol](http://www.stoa.org/sol).

## WHERE ALEXANDER'S WOMEN APPEAR IN THE CLASSICAL SOURCES:

**Adat I, Queen** Arr.I.22/23/30/33; Plut. *Mor.* 6.5.22; Arr.I.23.8

**Adat II, Princess** Arr.I.23.8

**Adel, Queen** Arr.I.1-7; Arr.*Succ.*I.22/23/30/33

**Anastasis, Queen** Arr.VII.4.5; Memnon FGrH 434 f1-4

**Apamê (Seleukos' bride)**

**Artakama (Ptolemy's bride)**

**Antiois (Eubrides' bride)**

**Atropates' daughter** (Bardikkas' bride)

**Atropates' 3 Amazons'**

**'Aiskapidois** Arr.I.22/23/30/33; Plut. *Al.* 21.4-5 < citing

**Baisine, Princess and concubine**

Hieronymos > ; Plut. *Al.* 21.4-5 < citing

Artistoboulos > ; Arr. III.21.4/23.7 & VII 4.6;

Athenaios VI 256c

**Baisine, State official, Queen** Arr.VII.4.4; Plut.*Al.*77.3-6; Arr.

VII.4.4; see also below: brides in Susa

**Barsine (Nearchos' bride)**

**Brides in Susa** Arr.I.1.6-7; Arr.III.22.6 and VII.4.4-8

**Cynane, Princess** Arr.I.22; Polyainos 8.60

**Drypetis, Princess** Arr.VII.4.4; see: Brides in Susa

**Drydike, Queen Mother** Plut.*Al.*14c; Strab. 326c;

Aeschines 2.26-29; *contra* Just. 7.4.5-8

**Hystaspes' wife, a grandchild of Ochus**

**Kallimachos, Xanthos**

(= Hieronymos Ep. F10)

**Kampanos, Pausanias, Adomus, VII**

**Kleofis, VII** Curt.8.10.22-36; Arr.IV.27.4;

Metz Ep.39-45; *contra* Just. 12.7.9-11

**Kleopatra, queen** XVIII.15.3/23.1/25.3; XX.37.5; SEG XXIII, 189.1; SEG IX; Pausanias I.44. (on the patronage of musicians)

**Kamik, (Thib), Artem Pella** 29a; Arr.IV.9.3

**Married girl, Pella**

**Olympias, queen** see Carney 2006, *Olympias*. Also, see Duris FGrH 76 on the *War of the Women*)

**Pamyvalis, princess**

**Pythia, VII** Plutarch 93.4; Plut. Al. 14.4; ps. Kall. 125

**Rosane, queen** 5 and 105.2-4; Plut. Al. 47.7 & 77.4; Arr.IV.19.5; Curt.8.4.21-30; Metz Ep.28-31/70

**Sexy, Marpe of Antipatrides**

**Stateira (wife of Darius III)** Be; Arr. II.11.9

**Telesipha, Batina** 329c; and Plut.Al.41.9-10 (\*)

**Thais, VII** Plut. Al. 38.2

**Thales, VII** 7, 7, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

**Porta Seythian Princess?** < Thalestris is an equivalent of the ‘Auspicious Amazon’, see id. >

**Thies, VII** 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

**Thimokleia, in Thebes** 259-260; Plut Al.12

**Syrac, VII** 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

**Sisyga, VII** 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100

38.1-7/59.7/67.1/118.3; Curt. III.3.12.6-12 and

X.5.17;Plut. *Al.* 21.1-3 and 43.3; Arr.II.11.9 / III.22.6; Valerius Max. 4.7.ext.2; *Itinerarium Alexandri* 15 XXXVII

(\*) **Plutarch**, *Moralia* 181a and 339c-d:

“When he was discharging the sick, a man admitted to Alexander that he feigned sickness because of love for Telesippa, who was departing for the sea; and Alexander asked, “With whom must one talk concerning Telesippa?” And when he learned that she was not a slave, he said, “Then let us, Antigenes, try to persuade Telesippa to stay with us; for to coerce her, a free woman, is not within our right.”

However, in his *Alexander* 41.9-10, Plutarch names not Antigenes but Eurylochos as the man who is in love with Telesippa. Heckel, in his *Who's Who*, considers the name Antigenes to be an error.

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 'All about Alexander the Great'  
[alexandros.blogspot.com](http://alexandros.blogspot.com) : by Argyraspid, a knowledgeable  
 Alexander follower

## BIOGRAPHICAL/GEOGRAPHICAL INDEX

### A:

**Abdastart** (Fenician name meaning “Servant of Astarté”; 376–358 BC king of Sidon who headed a rebellion against Persia. Artaxerxes III crushed the uprising in 345. Fenicia was then put under the control of the satrap Mazaïos/Mazday, who issued his own coins in Sidon in the period 342–337)

**Abdalonymos** (named king of Sidon by Hefaistion in 332 BC; died 312 BC at the Gaza battle of Ptolemy and Seleukos against Antigonos *One Eye*) VII

**Abu Muhammad bin Yusuf, “Nizami Ganjavi”** (1141–1209 AD Persian writer, author of the *Sikandar-Nama*) 142–146

**Abulites** (satrap who surrenders Susa to Alexander in 331 BC and is then reappointed; but in 325, accused of corruption and eliminated) VII

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reference to these tribes dates to 835 BC when Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, registers the tributes he has received from “the 27 tribes of the Parshuwa”. Initially, the Persians are vassals to the Medes with whom they share most of their cultural and linguistic characteristics. Hakhâmanish is believed to have united the tribes in the region of Fars around the year 700 BC. Darius the Great proclaims him as the founder of the Achaemenid dynasty. All the kings of its empire, which lasted from 550 to 330 BC, are his descendants) 1, 3, 8, 17, 24, 25, 26, 32, 36, 38, 41, 43, 46, 48, 59, 65, 73, 75, 78, 90, 110, 112, 113, 114, 128, 137, 145

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**Achilles** (the Trojan War hero in Homer and mythical ancestor of the royal house of Molossia – hence Alexander’s nickname “Little Achilles”. When he visited Troy in 334 BC, Alexander exchanged his own armour for a purported ‘shield of Achilles’. It accompanied him on the whole campaign, and saved his life in 325 when Peukestas covered him with it against the attacking Mallians. Alexander justifies his love for Roxane by quoting Achilles on Briseis: a Trojan woman Achilles had captured at Lyrnessos, and fell in love with. He planned to marry her upon their return to Greece: “Every sane and decent man loves his own wife and

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**Ada I**, Queen of Karia (c. 380–323 BC; officially adopted Alexander as son and heir in 334 BC. For her role in Karia’s history, see chapters 1 and 4) VII, 3, 30–33, 35, 39, 78, 81–84, 87, 159

**Ada II**, princess of Karia (c. 365–325 BC, Pixodaro’s daughter, so Ada’s niece; in 337, offered in marriage to a Makedonian prince; later, wife of the Persian satrap Orontobates) VI, 2, 6, 82, 159

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**Afrodite** (successor deity to the Great Goddess; divinity of sexual love, like the Roman Venus) 7, 29, 54, 55, 60, 61, 78, 83, 84, 88

**Ahura Mazda** (“Lord of Wisdom”, Persia’s main god; see also: Zoroaster) 55–57

**Aigai** (today: Vergina; former ceremonial capital of Makedon) 87, 90

**Aiolia** (satrapy in Asia Minor, bordering on the Hellespont) 151

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**Akkad** (city of Ancient Mesopotamia, to the north of Babylon; c 2350 BC, birthplace of Sargon, conqueror of the first multi-ethnic empire) 51

**Alexander I** (king of Makedon 497–454 BC, initially as a vassal to Persia, but after the Marathon battle he attacks and routs the Persian army in its withdrawal. In 500 BC, he was the first Makedonian ever to participate in the Olympic Games, as the Greek judges accepted his claim of descent from Perdikkas of Argos, the legendary conqueror of Makedon. Alexander's mother, queen Eurydike, is the first historical royal carrying this name <Family Tree: XI>) 89

**Alexander II** (king of Makedon 370– 368, murdered during a ritual dance; his mother, also called Eurydike, finally obtained the help of the Athenian general Ifíkrates to secure the throne for her second son, Perdikkas <Family Tree: XI>) 86

**Alexander III the Great** (356–323 BC; king of Makedon from 336 BC. He never called himself “the Great”, a title that first appears c. 220 BC in the Roman author Plautus, and is later adopted by Curtius and Plutarch). For specific themes/ episodes on Alexander and the following, see

under:

- Ada I of Karia (his adoptive mother)
- Ada II of Karia (his first marriage proposal)
- Achilles (his preferred hero)
- Amazons (his curiosity about)
- Ammon (his visit to Egypt's Ammon oracle)
- Aristoteles (teacher of Alexander & friends at a school in Mieza)
- Arrian (his biography & quotes of Alexander)
- Bagoas (his Persian eunuch lover)
- Barsine (his concubine, mother of his son Herakles)
- Barsine/Stateira (the daughter of Darius III he married in Susa)
- Carthago (his planned campaign against)
- Cyrus the Great (whose tomb Alexander had restored)
- Darius III (the Persian High King he routed)
- Drypetis (the daughter of Darius he married out to Hefaistion)
- Hefaistion (his lover, friend, advisor and prime minister)
- Kallixeina (the courtesan his mother hired for him)
- Kampaspe (the hetaira from Larissa in Thessaly he gave to Apelles)
- Kassander (the son of Antipater who opposed <poisoned?> him)
- Kleitos "the Black" (a Makedonian general he killed in Samarkand)
- Kleofis (the Indian queen he restored to the

throne in Massaga)

- Kleopatra (his full sister and ‘charity manager’ in Greece)
- Koran (where the prophet Muhammad speaks about Alexander)
- Olympias (his mother, whose advice he followed more often than not)
- Opis (the place of the open mutiny of his Makedonians)
- Parmenion (his old general he had killed as a preemptive measure)
- Persepolis (the Persian capital where he burned down the palaces)
- Philip II (his father he both learned from and conflicted with)
- Religious freedom (which he decreed after Cyrus’ example)
- Roman reverence for Alexander’s *magic*
- Roxane (his Baktrian wife he decided not to make his queen)
- Satraps (appointments of/elimination of)
- Sisymbiris (the Persian queen-mother whom he adored)
- Stateira/Barsine (her granddaughter whom he married in Susa)
- Syrian prophetess (who saved him from an assassination attempt)
- Testament (his Last Will faked by Ptolemy)
- Timokleia in Thebes (the Greek woman he pardoned and set free)
- Tomb of Alexander (its location still being a



mystery today)

- Tyre (the Fenician harbour city he took after a half-year siege)
- Uxians (the Persian tribe he pardoned at Sisygambis' plea)

**Alexander IV** (323–310 BC; his son by Roxane; killed in 310 BC by Kassander) 95, 98

**Alexander** (b. 301 BC, a son of Lysimachos by Amastris) 106

**Alexander of Molossia** (b. 362 BC, younger brother of Olympias and sometime lover of Philip, who made him king of Molossia in 342 and married him to his daughter Kleopatra in 336. Shortly afterwards, the Molossian Alexander went to war in Italy and was killed c. 331 in ambush in the Italian region Pandosia) 90, 91, 92

**Alexander Severus** (222–235 AD Roman emperor, who idolised Alexander) 147

**'Alexander Sarcophagus'** (see: Sarcophagus)

**Alexander Tomb in Alexandria** (In 320 BC, Ptolemy had buried Alexander's mummy first at Memphis –in a sarcophagus borrowed from an earlier pharaoh–, and then, provisionally, in the Alabaster Tomb at Alexandria. Half a century later, the body <“soma”> was relocated in a cold grotto under the magnificent mausoleum that would become –surrounded by tombs of Ptolemaic rulers– the landmark <“sema”> of the city. Venerated sanctuary first, profitable tourist attraction later, the Soma remained visi(ta) ble for six centuries, until a disastrous

earthquake/tsunami destroyed and inundated Alexandria's seafront in 365 AD. Comment by Libanius in 384 and by St. John Chrysostom c. 400 AD proves that the (salvaged) mummy was then still shown to visitors; after that, its trace is lost. However, an Alexander Tomb reappears under the Islamic rulers. In his *Description of Africa* of 1526, Leo Africanus testifies to the existence in Alexandria of "a chapel with a tomb much honored by the Mahometans, since it is asserted that within it is the corpse of Alexander the Great, grand prophet and king, as may be read in the Koran". This chapel contained the sarcophagus which later, rediscovered by Napoleon's Egyptologists but impounded by their British captors, ended up in the British Museum. There it was finally identified as made for pharaoh Nectanebo II, and probably reused for Alexander in Memphis, before his removal to Alexandria) 129

**Alexandra in Judea** (c. 35 BC, mother of the Hasmonean high priest in Jerusalem and self-proclaimed queen, enemy of king Herod who had Rome's backing. Cleopatra VII helped her and tried in vain to have Herod indicted for attacking her) 132

**Alexandria** (city founded by Alexander on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 331 BC in the Nile Delta between the island of Pharos <"following a dream mentioned by Homer"> and Lake Mareotis. Under the Ptolemies, this became the capital of Egypt and

site of the most important Library of the Ancient World) VII, 127, 128, 129, 140, 147, 155, 157

**Alinda** (today: Karpuzlu in S-W Turkey; in 334 BC, principal fortress of the – then exiled– queen Ada of Karia, on the Ionian coast) 31, 82

**Alketas** (355–320 BC, Makedonian general and brother of Perdikkas, on whose orders he had Cynnane killed. After the demise of Perdikkas in Egypt, Alketas was condemned to death by the Triparadeisos assembly, and committed suicide when Antigonos *One-Eye* was going to capture him) 93, 94, 120

**Amanikhabale** (*Kentake* = Queen-Mother of Meroe in Kush/Nubia, reigned c. 50–40 BC contemporary with Julius Caesar)

**Amanirenas** (*Kentake* of Meroe, reigned c. 50–40 BC contemporary with Julius Caesar and Augustus. Warlike, one-eyed sovereign who in 23 BC personally led her army to beat back the Romans and occupy Assuan, with its Isis temples of Philae. In 20 BC she sent her ambassador to the island of Samos to sign a peace treaty with Rome) 3, 62

**Amanishakete** (*Kentake* of Meroe, reigned c. 10–1 BC contemporary with Augustus) 62

**Amanitare** (*Kentake* of Meroe, reigned until 41 AD contemporary with Tiberius and Caligula)

**Amanitarakide** (*Kentake* of Meroe, reigned 40–50 AD contemporary with Claudius) 62

**Amastris** <1> (name of several Persian queens and princesses, e.g. a daughter of Darius II

married to the Achaemenid prince Hydarnes: the grand-parents of Sisygambis. The Old Persian name \*Amâstri-, containing \*ama-“strength, strong” and \*stri- “woman”, means “Woman of strength” < sic R. Schmitt >. The best known queen Amastris was, c. 490–440 BC, Xerxes’ only recorded wife, selected by his mother Atossa, and ‘heiress’ to her extraordinary power; she was a granddaughter of Darius I, probably via the marriage of Otanes to Darius’ daughter, sic Herodotos V 117.23. Plato mentions, in *Alkibiades*, her vast property ownership. Herodotos describes her as terrible, powerful, vengeful, and cruel. For example, he tells about a long, multicolor, royal robe she “had woven with her own hands” and which caused grave tension, because Xerxes gave it away to his daughter-in-law Artaynte when he seduced her in Sardès. In revenge, Herodotos said, Amastris had her mother tortured) 3, 68, 72

**Amastris** < 2 > (345–284 BC; Oxyatres’ daughter; Sisygambis’ granddaughter, first given in titular marriage to Artaxerxes III *Ochus*, and later really married –in Susa, 324 BC– to Krateros who, after Alexander’s death also took a daughter of Antipater for wife, whereat Amastris refused to play the role of a secondary concubine. She then (c. 322 BC) became the wife and queen of Dionysios of Herakleia. With him she had three children: Klearchos, Oxathres and Amastris. When Dionysios died in 306 BC, Amastris became

widow Queen. Coins have been excavated with her portrait and the inscription “Amastrios Basilissès”, Amastris queen. Strabo says the city of Amastris on the coast of Paflagonia was founded by her. She married Lysimachos in 302, and bore him -though aged about 40, which was considered very old- a son, who was called Alexander for evident propaganda reasons; his birth signalled the intention of his parents to reinstate Alexander’s empire. In 301 BC Lysimachos, driven by political need, married Ptolemy’s daughter Arsinoe. Amastris again refused to become secondary wife, and returned alone to her likenamed city, where in the end she was murdered c. 284 by her sons. In return, they were executed by Lysimachos) 2, 27, 47, 48, 49, 93, 103–108, 159

**Amazons** (legendary warrior women; Alexander was very interested in them. Their origin is possibly related to armed women guards at Great Goddess sites. Classical authors cite 82 Amazon queens or warriors by name, 37 of them in the Herakles-legend. Others fought in the ‘Attic War’ against Theseus, where 24 of them are named; and 14 Amazons are said to have taken part in the Trojan War, like Penthesileia. The ‘Vulgata’ literary tradition on Alexander has him making love variously to the Amazon queen Thalestris; to the Nubian warrior queen Candace; to the ‘Auspicious Amazon’ in the *Sikandar-Nama*; and to a warrior princess in the *Darab Nama*, who is a

stand-in for the goddess Anahita. Near Ekbatana in 324 BC, satrap Atropates of Media offers Alexander, as a *gift*, a troop of 100 so-called 'Amazons'; that is, women on horseback and equipped to look like Amazons) 2, 10–13, 46, 79, 141, 142, 143, 159, 160

**Ammon** (Egyptian god equivalent of Zeus, with a famous oracle at Síwah where Alexander is officially proclaimed son of the god. Therefore his coins depict him wearing the distinctive horns that denote Ammon. The **Ammon Temple** at **Luxor**, rebuilt by Ramses II and remodelled under Alexander, is the only place where Alexander's name can still be seen written in hieroglyphics and enclosed in the pharaoh cartouche, on the interior sanctuary walls that depict him as fulfilling an Egyptian religious rite) 14, 151

**Amu Darya** (river that runs to the Aral Sea, in ancient times called Oxus and considered the northern boundary of the Achaemenid empire) 54

**Amyntas III** (king of Makedon 393–370 BC, polygamous monarch whose last wife is 'Eurydike, daughter of Sirras', mother of the future kings Alexander II, Perdikkas III and Philip II <Family Tree: XI>) 86, 90

**Amyntas** (son of Perdikkas III, nephew and 'substitute heir' to Philip II; married to Cynnane; killed 336 BC on Alexander's orders <Family Tree: XI>) 16, 89, 91

**Amytis** <1> (c. 560 BC, a daughter of king Astyages of Media, widowed and then married by Cyrus the Great who first had called her “mother”, sic Ktesias FGrH 688 f9; Xenofon in his *Cyropaedia* says she crowned him. It was a political, titular marriage. In reality, the effective wife and queen of Cyrus was Kassandane) 1, 44–45, 65

**Amytis** <2> (A daughter of queen Amastris and Xerxes, given in marriage to Megabyzos; their other daughter was called Rodogune)

**Anahita** (originally the Sogdian/Bactrian Goddess of Waters; successor deity to the Great Goddess, protectress of the throne, given official prominence in the Persian empire by Artaxerxes II –his A2Sa and A2Ha inscriptions mark the first time she is mentioned on equal footing with Ahura Mazda and Mithra by a High King– but ‘suppressed’ by Artaxerxes III. In reality her cult lived on, as Strabo XV.3.13 states: “The Persians worship Afrodite and Water...” in other words, Anahita. On Anahita’s history: see Chapter 2. A descendant of Anahita priests at her main temple in Istakhr, near Pasargadai/Persepolis, became the founder of the Sassanid dynasty, Ardasher, who reinstated Anahita as the patroness of royalty) 37, 46, 49, 54–59, 78, 83, 142, 163

**Anaitis** (Babylonian goddess, assimilated to Anahita) 55

**Antigenes** <1> (of Pallene; Greek author, cited by Plutarch) 141

**Antigenes** <2> (Makedonian soldier twice cited by Plutarch as the man who asks for false invalidity leave in order to accompany the *hetaira* Telesippa; but in a third instance, Plutarch cites Eurylochos of Aigai as Telesippa's lover – Heckel considers this to be the correct identity) 161

**Antigonos One-Eye** (382–301 BC; Alexander's general; then king in Asia Minor and parts of Mesopotamia, won and lost during the Successor Wars; in the end, Antigonos is routed and killed at the battle of Ipsos by Lysimachos, Seleukos and Ptolemy) 83, 94, 95, 96, 106, 107, 108, 119, 120, 124, 125, 127–128, 130, 139, 140, 155

**Antigonos Gonatas** (320–239 BC, a grandson of *One-Eye*; king of Makedon in 276–239 BC) 127

**Antiklides** (c. 250 BC; Greek author cited by Plutarch) 141

**Antioch** (city on the Orontes river, c. 300 BC refounded by Seleukos as his capital city; today: Antakya in Turkey near the border with Syria) 128

**Antipater** (397–319 BC, Makedonian general and politician, friend of king Philip and of the philosopher Aristoteles. Governor/Regent of Makedon for both Philip and Alexander, in spite of the open hostility that his mother Olympias always displayed towards Antipater. In 324, Alexander sent Krateros with orders to take over all power from Antipater; but after the king's premature death in 323, Krateros decided to sustain the Regent. Though Antipater refrained



from appointing his own son Kassander as his successor –instead, he named Polyperchon as Regent–, Kassander by the force of arms took the power, and finally the throne, in Makedon) 11, 16, 17, 28, 29, 30, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 98, 104, 105, 119, 120, 121, 123, 124, 139, 154

**Antipatrides** (old friend on the campaign trail who c. 344 tries to have his sexy harper seduce Alexander) 2, 7, 160

**Anthylla** (village of shoemakers in Egypt) 68

**Apame** <1> (a traditional name in the Persian royal house, probably related to the Avestan *apama*: “the latest” hence “the youngest [child]”. Darius the Great had married a daughter of Gobrias called Apame before he came to the throne; however, their first-born son did not succeed him, see Ariamenes/Artobazanes)

**Apame** <2> (415–380 BC Achaemenid princess, sister of Sisygambis; married to Farnabazos, satrap of Hellepontine Frygia. Their son is prince Artabazos, so this Apame is the grandmother of Barsine the concubine <Family Tree: X>) 17

**Apame** <3> (a.k.a. Artakama, c. 350–320 BC; a sister of Barsine, married to Ptolemy in Susa, but divorced by him in Egypt so as to marry Antipater’s daughter Bereneike) 161

**Apame** <4> (345–280 BC, daughter of the Sogdian leader Spitamenes. After his death by treason, Apame was taken under Alexander’s personal protection; in all probability he sent her to Susa to be brought up by Sisygambis. At the

Susa Weddings, he married her to Seleukos; the Seleukid dynasty descends from her. She is called 'Basilissa', queen, in an inscription at Didyma dated 299/8 BC. Seleukos named several cities after her. Their son Antiochus succeeded his father in 281 BC) 2, 27, 47, 48, 103, 107, 159, 161

**Apelles** (famous Ionian painter, aprox. 360–300 BC, who worked for Philip, Alexander and Ptolemy. Alexander held him in the highest esteem and sent the hetaira Kampaspe, who had been his own concubine, to the house of Apelles. His paintings are no longer extant, but literary descriptions of them survive; see under Pliny) 2, 7

**Aphrodisias** (Great Goddess shrine on the Morsynes river, the oldest recorded human settlement in Karia; in times of the Roman empire, Aphrodisias became a famous production center of Afrodite/Venus statues) 77

**Appianus of Alexandria** (95–165 AD; Greco-Roman author of *The Mithridatic Wars*) 157

**Arabia** (strategic objective of a Fleet campaign Alexander prepared for 323 BC) VIII

**Arachosia** (land south of Hindu Kush in today's Afghanistan; conquered by Alexander) 152

**Aramaic** (alphabet & archives in this language, a diplomatic "lingua franca" in Mesopotamia) 66, 112, 131

**Arashara** (professional title of feminine Persian managers. The *Arasharas* supervised groups of -

mostly female- personnel employed by the imperial family. On tablet PF 1720, the treasurer of Darius I in Persepolis registers meat rations for four *Arasharas* whom he cites by name, which confirms their high rank: Dakma, Harbakka, Matmabba and Sadukka. They have a high salary level: tablet, PF 1666, records the issuing of 750 quarts of wine, divided among 65 workers. Three *Arasharas* receive the highest amount: 30 quarts each, while one male scribe gets 20 quarts. In exceptional occasions, a woman executive can even be seen to receive 50 quarts. Numerous *Arasharas* are found to be working on the estates of Darius' queen-mother Irdabama who has many worker units, ranging from groups of three to several hundred people, stationed in various locations) 1, 3, 73–74

**Arbela** (principal city near the Gaugamela battlefield, so some sources call the decisive showdown between Alexander and Darius III on October 1<sup>st</sup> 331 BC, the 'battle of Arbela'. Today the town is known as Irbil, in Kurdistan, and since over 5.000 years maintains a millenarian fortification in its city centre) VII

**Ardasher I** (born around 180 AD, a descendant of Anahita priests in her temple at Istakhr near Persepolis. By 210 AD, Ardasher controlled the whole region of Persis, where he routed the king of the Parthians and so became the founder of the 'Sassanid' empire which he headed in 226–240 AD. He left behind a 'governance manual' known

as the *Testament of Ardasher*, that also explains the use of spies. Ardasher wanted to be seen as the direct heir to the Achaemenid dynasty, as his own 'king name' was meant to underline: "Ardasher" is the form in which the ancient name Artaxerxes was pronounced in his days. See also: Zoroaster) 114

**Ardvi Sura Anahita** (= goddess Anahita, see Chapter 2) 54–58

**Argeads** (Royal House of Makedon, descended from 7<sup>th</sup> century BC king Argaios <Family Tree: XI>) 89, 90, 96

**Ariamenes** (sic Plutarch; Herodotos calls him **Artobazanes**. First son of Darius the Great, born c. 530 from Apame; but it was Xerxes, the first-born of Darius and Atossa, who succeeded him on the throne. This elder brother, Ariamenes/Artobazanes, did not reclaim the crown, and was highly valued by Xerxes, who appointed him supreme commander of Persia's naval forces at the battle of Salamis in 480 BC. There, Ariamenes died in action. Queen Artemisia of Karia recovered his corpse from the sea, so permitting Xerxes to give his oldest brother a worthy burial) 79–80

**Aristoboulos of Kassandreia** (c. 390– 300 BC; Alexander's engineer, and biographer c. 306 BC) 13, 21, 34, 141, 154, 156, 159, 161

**Aristofanes** (450–385 BC Greek classic playwright of comedies) 112

**Aristoteles** (384–322 BC famous biologist and

philosopher; born in Stagira, Makedon, son of Philips' physician; student under Plato in Athens; 343– 340 BC teacher of Alexander and his friends at a school in Mieza established by Philip for his son, though Aristoteles in theory propounded a public education system, as he wrote in his *Politica*, 1337a21: "Since the whole *polis* has one end, it is manifest that the same education should be necessarily for all; and that it should be public, not private as it is now. The training in matters common to all, should be common.") 6, 139, 154

**Armenia** (satrapy of Artashata, the future Darius III; birthplace of Sisygambis' mother Stateira, the wife of Artaxerxes II. In present-day Armenia, a Christian nation, the central bank of the nation has issued a gold coin in homage to the ancient goddess Anahita) 38, 42, 54, 55, 107, 109

**Arrian, Lucius Flavius** (85–162 AD, born in Nikomedia, modern-day Izmit, 75 kms east of Istanbul. Greco-Roman politician, general and historian who studied under Epiktetos together with his friend, the later emperor Hadrian. Author of the most reliable biography on Alexander) 12, 21, 26, 31, 32, 66, 94, 101, 119, 135, 139–141, 150, 155, 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 163

**Arridaios** (358–317 BC; Alexander's retarded half-brother and successor, married in 321 to his niece Adeia; both executed on Olympias' orders) <Family Tree: XI> VI, 6, 16, 23, 24, 25, 88, 90,

94, 95, 119, 120

**Arrybas** (king of Molossia replaced by Philip in 342 BC with his future son-in-law Alexandros, Olympias' brother) 87, 88

**Arsames/Arshama** (name of several Achaemenid princes; it derived from the Old Persian *aršan* “male, hero” and *ama* “strength”, thus meaning “having a hero's strength”; the feminine form Aršâmâ is also attested, in the name of a daughter of Darius the Great. **Arshama** (c. 400–359 BC), the cousin and husband of Sisygambis, was a son of Artaxerxes II's brother Otanes. In 359 BC, when Ochus and Bagoas eliminated all possible throne rivals, they also had Arsames murdered. Arsames being son-in-law to Artaxerxes II, it might be possible that he is the one meant by Plutarch when he cites an Arsames in *Artaxerxes* 30, saying he was the most trusted son of Artaxerxes II and therefore killed by his rival half-brother Ochus: “As for Arsames, it did not escape Ochus that he seemed to be intelligent and was most dear to his father. It was clear that the king trusted him most and spoke freely with him. So Ochus did not delay and had Arsames killed. The king then died of grief and despair.” <Family Tree: X>) 38, 110

**Arses/Arsicas/Arshú** (birth name of Artaxerxes II, see id.; Old Persian name derived from \*R-ša, “the hero”. Babylonian: Ár-šú, sic Tavernier 2007) 69–70

**Arsinoe** (Ptolemy's daughter married to king

Lysimachos in 300 BC) 106, 108

**Artabazos** (name derived from Old Persian \*Rtavazdah; Rta/Arta being “the right cosmic order” or “truth”. The father of Barsine, prince Artabazos 387–325 BC, was appointed satrap of Hellespontine Frygia in 362 BC, to succeed his father Farnabazos in office. After a failed rebellion against Artaxerxes III, he took refuge 352–344 BC in Makedon with his family, including Barsine; in the end, he was pardoned and returned to Persia. During Alexander’s invasion, Artabazos stayed at the side of his younger cousin Darius III until his murder by Bessos; refused to recognise Bessos as High King, and went over to Alexander who made him satrap of Baktria. His eldest son became one of Alexander’s cavalry commanders; his daughters were held in high esteem, as Barsine was a long-time bedmate of Alexander, and Artakama and Artonis were married to Ptolemy and Eumenes at the Susa Weddings) VI, 17, 18, 19, 89

**Artakama** (c. 350–320 BC; also called Apame, see *ibid.*; a sister of Barsine, married to Ptolemy in Susa, but divorced by him in Egypt so as to marry Antipater’s daughter Bereneike) 2, 159

**Artashata** (birth name of Darius III, see *id.*; Old Persian name derived from \*R-ta-ša-ti-š, meaning “joy of Arta” sic Tavernier; Dandamayev reconstructs \*R-ta-šya-ta-, “happy through truthfulness”)

**Artasyras** (c. 450–400/390 BC?; satrap of Hyrcania

on the shore of the Caspian Sea. Artasyras also held the office of “King’s Eye”, spy chief, and was rewarded for his services with the marriage of his son Orontes to Rodogune, the eldest daughter of High King Artaxerxes II. The Old Persian name Artasura means: “powerful through truth”. In the empire of the Medes, king Astyages –toppled by Cyrus in 559 BC– had installed a satrap named Artasyras in Hyrcania: the beginning of a high-ranking lineage. His like-named son was mentioned by Ktesias <FGrH688. f13> as a close advisor of Cyrus, Cambyses and Darius in the period 520–490 BC: “...most highly regarded by Cambyses was the Hyrcanian Artasyras”. Also his grandson held high office under Xerxes I, Ktesias added: “Artapanos, son of Artasyras, became his most influential advisor, like his father had been with Darius.” Babylonian sources say Xerxes was killed by his son Artaxerxes I, who then executed Artapanos accusing him of having killed the king; this may have been a cover-up of the real/royal assassination (Kuhrt 2007). The son of Artapanos, Artasyras, again was satrap of Hyrcania, and became *King’s Eye* to Artaxerxes II) 37, 109, 110

**Artaxata** (capital of Armenia, site of an Anahita temple with a famous golden statue of the goddess, looted by the Romans) 55

**Artaxerxes** (throne name of several Achaemenid kings; the Old Persian form Artaxšaça means “whose reign is through truth”. Artaxerxes I



reigned 465–424 BC; see: Persia's King List, p. IX) 58, 68

**Artaxerxes II** (b. 452 BC, r. 404–358 BC; Sisygambis' father. His biographer Plutarch renders his Old Persian name Arshú as Arsicas. Married to Stateira, a princess of the Achaemenid lineage born in Armenia; later he also had a titular marriage –for politico-religious reasons?– with his daughters Atossa and Amastris. <A quote from Iran Heritage web: “Artaxerxes II introduced the Anahita cult, and a calendar reform in which the names of Zoroastrian deities were substituted for the earlier Persian month-names. What emerged was an eclectic religion, Zoroastrianism, that showed an overriding concern over purity and pollution, the establishment of fire temples, and a strong ethical code based on man's part in the cosmic struggle between the principles of the Truth and the Lie. Thus, it contained a great deal of the Old Iranian religion. In any case, policy of the Achaemenids toward other religions was one of tolerance.”>) 17, 30, 37, 41, 42, 46, 55, 56, 59, 68, 69–71, 73, 80, 109–110, 113

**Artaxerxes III “Ochus”** (a half-brother of Sisygambis. *Ochus* derives from the Old Persian \*Vahush meaning: “The Good One”; Babylonian version: \*Umasu. About 361 BC, Ochus –son of a concubine– led a campaign against Egypt, then in rebellion under Tachos, and obtained that pharaoh's surrender. As Artaxerxes III, Ochus

accessed to the throne in February 358 BC and remained in power until his death in 338 BC. He began his reign with the mass murder of 80 of his half-brothers. <See: Persia's King List: IX; and Family Tree: X>) 6, 24, 26, 30, 32, 38, 56, 72, 81, 89, 90, 104, 113

**Artaxerxes IV** (son of *Ochus*, whose vizier Bagoas poisoned him in 336; this allowed Darius III to ascend the throne; he in turn poisoned Bagoas) IX, X

**Artazostre** (daughter of Darius the Great by his favourite wife Irtashduna/Artystone. Her Old Persian name means "Taking delight in Arta". In the Persepolis archive, clay tablet PF a5 identifies her as *Sunki Pakri*, royal daughter, and states she has received rations for 4 days to travel out to her husband general Mardonius as he returns from Xerxes' campaign in 492 BC to recover Thrace and Macedonia as Persian provinces; her travels confirm the freedom of movement of Persian women) 1

**Artemis** (Greek goddess assimilated in Persia to Anahita and in Rome to Diana. The great Temple of Artemis in Efesos was one of the Seven Wonders of Antiquity. It had been built with funds donated by king Croesus of Lydia, but burned down on the same day Alexander was born. The "Artemis of Efesos" is a Karian fertility deity with multiple breasts, derived from the Mother Goddess) VI, 54, 55, 78

**Artemisia I** (queen of Karia c. 480 BC, succesful

admiral for Xerxes at Salamis naval battle, where she recovered from the sea the corpse of Ariamenes, eldest brother of the Persian king. As token of esteem, Xerxes put her in charge of some of his sons, whom she took to Efesos to be educated by the Karian eunuch Hermotimos. Evidently, this ‘familiar’ relationship with the Achaemenids gave the Karian rulers access to inside information on the workings of the Persian empire) 3, 32, 77, 78, 79, 80

**Artemisia II** (queen of Karia 377–350 BC, finished building the “Mausoleum” for her deceased husband Maussolo; also, she turned the tables on an invasion force from Rhodes) 3, 81

**Artim** (a wetnurse to Xerxes’ daughter Ratahshah. In 486 BC, the ascension year of Xerxes, a clay tablet –found in 1892 at Bit Sahiran near Babylon– registers a payment for landlease to “Artim, the wetnurse of Ratahsah, daughter of the king”) 74

**Artobazanes, see: Ariamenes** (eldest son of Darius I, and naval commander at the Salamis battle in 480 BC for his brother king Xerxes) 79, 80

**Artonis** (daughter of Artabazos; sister of Barsine; and wife to Eumenes at the Susa Weddings) 2, 159

**Artystone** (= Irtashduna, see *ibidem*) 68

**Asander** (Makedonian general, relative of Antigonos *One-Eye*; protected queen Ada in Karia, 334 BC, on Alexander’s orders; then succeeded her as satrap in 323 BC, appointed by Perdikkas)

**Aspasia** (concubine of Artaxerxes II, then lover of his son Darius) 73

**Assuan** (Egyptian frontier city on the first Nile cataract, with a famous Isis temple on the nearby Philae island) 61, 62, 112, 127

**Assyrian** queen (Sammur-Amat, see id.) 3, 39, 65

**Astarté** (since the Bronze Age, successor deity of the Great Goddess in the Levant and Mesopotamia, later identified with Babylonian goddess Ishtar/Inanna) 54, 61

**Astyages** (king of Medes c. 560 BC, toppled by his grandson Cyrus the Great; Astyages' widowed daughter Amytis was then taken in marriage by Cyrus) 44, 45, 65, 67

**Athena** (Greek deity, also a successor to the Great Goddess. Robert Graves, in his *White Goddess*, notes that Athena's name may in part reflect the ancient roots of her divinity, because AN or ANNA is Sumerian for "Heaven", e.g. Inanna, or Nin-Anna, "Lady of Heaven". Thus, the Greek Athena would in origin be Athe-anna, like the Roman goddess Diana would be Di-anna. The operative root is *Anna*, which denotes life-giving divinity, as held by the Great Goddess. Athena was venerated at an ancient temple on the Akropolis, where Perikles later had the Parthenon built) 54, 55, 84

**Athenaios** of Naukratis in Egypt (c.140–200 AD, Greek writer who quotes from many other authors in his *Deipnosophistai* = "Gastronomer's

table-talk”) 159, 160

**Athens** (Greek capital city where Arrian was “archon”, mayor, in 148–149 AD) VI, 1, 2, 5, 9, 15, 30, 61, 86, 87, 92, 102, 113, 114, 123, 135, 139, 156, 157

**Atossa** (Old Persian \*Utauθa = Hutaosā, possibly meaning “well granting”. The name Atossa, traditional in the Achaemenid clan, was already carried by a sister of Cambyses I. The most famous bearer of this name was c. 550–515 BC the eldest daughter of Cyrus the Great and Kassandane. This Atossa was married c 533 to her brother Cambyses II who became king three years later. After his death, she passed to her other brother Bardiya a.k.a. Gaumâta/Smerdis, a former rebel and shortlived king. Some months later, Darius I killed Bardiya in a palace coup and made Atossa his main consort and queen. A prominent motive may have been Darius’ wish to legitimize the accession of his own collateral Achaemenid line by joining with a member of Cyrus’ family. Atossa was a well educated intellectual woman, and the invention of an adapted alphabet for all imperial correspondence is credited to her. She had four sons by Darius. Xerxes was the eldest; the others were Hystaspes, leader of Baktrian troops in Xerxes’ army, Masistes, one of Xerxes’ commanding generals, and Achaemenes, admiral of the Egyptian fleet. Because of her lineage and by her intelligence, Atossa exercised great influence on her husband

and c. 487 won his support for the succession of Xerxes. When Darius named Xerxes his heir, Atossa's status as the successor's mother further increased her vast power. The smooth transition to Xerxes' rule after Darius' death must have been due in part to Atossa's great authority. During her son's reign she held the high status of queen-mother. Her reputation is reflected in Aischylos' *Persae*: Darius, called up from Hades by the chorus, explicitly approves of her influence over her son (lines 832ff.). Herodotos states in VII.3: "Atossa was all-powerful". She was said to worship the goddess Anahita) 3, 38, 45, 59, 65, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74, 163

**Atossa the Younger** (a daughter of Artaxerxes II; in exchange for a promise to make her queen, Atossa supported a rebellion of her half-brother Artaxerxes III Ochus to seize the throne in 359 BC. But she was foiled: he had her murdered, and married her daughter instead) 73

**Atropates** (Zoroastrian satrap of Media; in 324 BC, after one of his daughters was married in Susa to Perdikkas, he offered Alexander a gift of one hundred 'Amazons') 2, 12, 13, 27, 159

**Attalid dynasty** (282–144 BC; a general of Lysimachos, Filetairos, took control of Pergamon; his descendant Attalos I proclaimed himself independent king there in 241 BC) 127, 128

**Attalos** (Makedonian noble, uncle and ward of Philip's last bride; hostile to Alexander, who ordered his death in 336 BC) 90, 91, 97

**Audata** (in 358, Illyrian ‘war bride’ for Philip, whom she bears his first daughter, Kunnanè/Cynnane) 16, 88, 89, 90, 119

**Augustus** (63 BC - 14 AD, nephew and adopted son of Julius Caesar, so first Roman emperor; visited the Alexander Tomb in 30 BC after defeating Cleopatra VII and downgrading Egypt to ‘imperial province’) 35, 62, 129, 130, 131, 132

**Ausfeld** (German historian, Leipzig; *Der griechische Alexanderroman* published in 1907) 123

**‘Auspicious Amazon’**; (a much embroidered equivalent, in the Oriental Alexander Romances, of the mythical Amazon Thalestris in Western literature; see Thalestris) 10, 142, 159, 160

**Avesta** (Zoroastrian ‘bible’, composed over a span of many centuries; its oral version was canonised c. 650 BC, but no written version appeared until much later dates. Tradition holds that the founding father of the Sassanid empire, Ardasher I, c. 230 AD ordered the first written text of this sacred book to be composed. However, none of the early copies of the *Avesta* survive; the oldest extant text dates from the year 1288 AD. Academic consensus agrees that the *Avesta* was only transmitted in oral versions until the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. This means that no book of the kind existed in the Achaemenid empire conquered by Alexander. Even so, the Persian historian Tabari proclaimed in the 10th century AD that “one of the most depraved acts ever

committed” was Alexander’s order to burn the *Avesta*. This accusation of religious intolerance is still sustained nowadays by certain fanatics) 55, 113, 144

**Axe Tower/Snake Tower** (fortification at the highest point of the royal stronghold on Halikarnassos’ harbor island; over its entrance it had sculpted the double axe, a national icon of Karia derived from the Great Goddess cult. Another of her icons, the ‘snake motif’, is sculpted over the entrance of a lower, round tower which is considered the oldest edification on these grounds) 84

**Ayn Manâwîr** (near Khargeh Oasis; site of a Persian *qanat* irrigation system) 137

**B:**

**Babylon** (ancient commercial city and political center on the river Euphrates. After his victory of 331 BC at Gaugamela, Alexander celebrates a triumphal entry in Babylon and decides to make this the capital of his new empire. His tetradrachma coins issued here carry the mark MTR for *metropolis*=capital. Also, he puts the Persian governor Mazday in charge of Babylon, probably on advice of Sysigambis. The special relation of the Babylonians with Alexander is confirmed in the **Babylon Astronomical Diary** which uses (II.330.3–15) for Alexander the triumphal title of *Shar Kirshati*, “King of the entire World”, instead of *Shar Matati*, “King of



the Lands”, that was used for the Persian High Kings) VII, VIII, 15, 20, 23, 42, 43, 47, 54, 65, 69, 71, 73, 74, 83, 95, 105, 107, 113, 120, 125, 128, 130, 138, 143, 151, 157

**Babyloniaka** (chronicle of legends and history written by Berosus, see id.) 56, 157

**Bagoas** (Egyptian eunuch, henchman and grand vizier of *Ochus*, killed by Darius III in 336 BC) X

**Bagoas** (Persian eunuch, bedmate of Alexander) 8

**Baktra** (Alexander’s HQ in 327 BC; city, present-day Balkh in northern Afghanistan) VIII, 56

**Baktria** (satrapy of Artabazos under Alexander; present-day Afghanistan) VIII, 20, 21, 23, 27, 43, 45, 54, 151

**Bardiya** (brother, and in 522 BC would-be successor, to Cambyses II) 66, 67

**Barsine** (name of several princesses in the Achaemenid dynasty; a Greek rendering of the Old Persian *Brzina* derived from \*Brz = “high”, sic Tavernier 2010; thus, evidently, a pet name meaning “My sweetie highness”) 17, 159

**Barsine** <1> (c. 358–309 BC, Persian princess. Through Apame she was a great-granddaughter of Artaxerxes II, so grand-niece of Sisygambis. As daughter of Artabazos she went in exile with him (352–343 BC) at Pella, and was presented to Alexander at some point. She was married first, c. 342, to her Rhodian mother’s brother Mentor, whom she bore a daughter before he died in 340; then to his brother Memnon, whom she bore a son. Her daughter was given in marriage to Nearchos

at the Susa weddings. Captured in Damascus by Parmenion, she became –333 BC– Alexander’s concubine, and accompanied him on the Eastern campaign. After the birth in Baktria of their son Herakles in 327 BC, she returned to Pergamon, both were called to Greece and later killed by Polyperchon in 309 BC. The Parian Marble registers “when Hieromemnon was archon of Athens” –that is, 310/309– the death of “another son of Alexander, by the daughter of Artabazos”) VI, VII, X, 2, 3, 8, 17–21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 39, 41, 95, 159

**Barsine** <2> (340–323 BC, imperial princess of Persia, daughter of Darius III and his queen Stateira; eldest granddaughter of Sisygambis. When still a baby, this Barsine was promised in marriage to the satrap of Syria, Mazday, probably in exchange for his promise to support Darius’ claim to the throne. Once king, however, Darius reneges on this promise, and in his negotiations with Alexander offers him Barsine as a bride. Finally, in 324 at the Susa weddings Alexander indeed marries her –which probably is the stately occasion on which her name was changed to Stateira–, to make her the ranking queen of the empire and mother of the official heir <Family Tree: X>) 3, 22, 23, 45, 47, 89, 101, 105, 107, 123, 159

**Berosus** (Chaldean: Bel-re’ushunu; born c. 330 BC; priest of Bel, astronomer, and temple chief in Babylon; emigrated to Kos, Asian Minor, and c.

285 BC wrote his *Babyloniaka* chronicle of legends and history in three books; only a few fragments remain, relative to the 6<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) 56, 157

**Bessos** (c. 380–329 BC, a distant relative of Darius III. Satrap of Baktria and Sogdia; murderer and would-be successor of Darius) VII, IX, 19, 43, 44

**Bodrum** (city in S-W Turkey; former Halikarnassos, see id.) 84

**Bosworth, A. B.** (b. 1943; professor of Ancient History at the Western University in Australia, and a top expert on Alexander's era) 22, 129, 162

**Briseis** (a Trojan princess Achilles had captured at Lyrnessos, and fell in love with. When Agamemnon took her away, Achilles refused to fight at Troy –instead he attacked Trojan allies elsewhere– until she was given back to him. They planned to marry: “Every sane and decent man loves his own wife and cares for her, as in my heart I loved Briseis, though I won her by the spear,” says Achilles in *Iliad* IX, 341–343) 21

**Brosius, Maria** (professor of Ancient History at the universities of Newcastle and Oxford; author of *Women in Ancient Persia*) 38, 45, 72–74, 134, 162

**C:** <Note: some entries under ‘C’ would begin with a ‘K’ in their original, non-Romanised version >

**Cádiz** (Fenician colony in Spain where Caesar saw Alexander's statue) 129

**Caesar, Julius** (100–44 BC, founder of the roman

Empire, openly admired Alexander; in his new 'Forum Iulianum' in Rome, he had a big equestrian statue of Alexander set up, and together with Cleopatra VII he paid a visit to the Alexandrian Tomb) 61, 128, 129, 131, 132, 135

**Caesarion** (47–30 BC; son of Caesar and Cleopatra VII) 131, 132

**Caligula** (12–41 AD; mad Roman emperor, had Alexander's armor robbed from the Tomb, so he could put it on for special occasions)

**Cambyses II** (r. 530–522 BC, Old Persian: "Kambujia"; son of Cyrus the Great; conquered Egypt in 525. Greek tales from Egyptian sources are very hostile to Cambyses who is said to have married (sic Herodotos) "his two full sisters" <i.e. Atossa and Roxane, also children of Cyrus and Kassandane>. He was also married to Faedymie, a daughter of Otanes <she was later taken over by Darius I>. His death in 522 seems caused by an accidental wound, on a return voyage to Persia trying to subdue the Bardiya uprising) IX, 45, 65, 66, 67, 112

**canal Nile-Red Sea** (first dug under pharaoh Senusset III c. 1850 BC through the Wadi Tumilat/'Bitter Lakes' depression, natural outlet to the Red Sea from the eastern arm of the prehistoric Nile delta. Re-excavated by Hatshepsut and other pharaohs, widened on the order of Darius I, it was in full use in Alexander's days and in the early Roman Empire: both Trajan and Hadrian signed orders for its maintenance)

130, 137

**Candace** (Roman transcription for the Nubian *Kentaké* <=queen mother> in Meroé; see: Kentake. In the 'Romance' sources, probably inspired by the real Kleofis episode in India, Alexander visits a fictional Nubian warrior queen called Candace, and has a love affair with her) 36, 61

**Cappadocia** (central Asia Minor, conquered after Alexander's death by Perdikkas and Eumenes. Four centuries later the general/writer Arrian was appointed by his friend the Roman emperor Hadrian as the governor of this region. In this period 131–137 Arrian opposed and defeated an invasion by the Alans, a tribe of Scythian origin) 93, 130, 140, 156

**Caracalla** (188–217 AD, Roman emperor who visited the Alexander Tomb in 215 AD; he tried to imitate Alexander) 147

**Caria** (= Karia, see id.) 163

**Carmania** (in S-E Persia; Alexander held a thanksgiving Festival there after crossing the Gadrosia desert) 152

**Carney, Elizabeth Donnelly** (b. 1947; professor of History at Clemson University in South Carolina, US; expert on Olympias and Alexander; her biographical notes on Olympias, quoted on [pages 97–100](#); also, see [Reference Works: pages 162–163](#)) 19, 24, 25, 29, 41, 92, 96, 132, 134, 160, 162, 163

**Carthago** (North African city at the location of

present-day Tunes. Former colony of Fenicia since 7<sup>th</sup> century BC, and merchant empire. Alexander was planning to subdue this rival power, and had ordered Krateros to build a fleet of warships for this purpose. The naval construction had already begun when Alexander died, but Perdikkas repealed this plan. Carthago went on to become Rome's main rival) VIII, 104, 129, 130

**Chaironea** (site of the battle in 338 BC that gave Philip control over Greece. Alexander led the left wing and broke through the Arthenian and Theban lines, so deciding victory. Philip's allies at Chaironea were then united in the 'League of Corinth'. Chaironea also is the birthplace of Plutarch) VI, 9, 141, 155

**Chandragupta Maurya** (321–289 BC; Indian king who in 305 'bought' Alexander's Indian conquests from Seleukos for 500 war elephants) 107, 125, 128

**Chares of Mytilene** (367–313 BC; chamberlain of Alexander and author of a book about his court) 21, 26, 101, 140, 141, 154

***chiliarch*** (literally, "commander of a thousand": highest military rank in Makedon. Exclusively in the case of Hefaistion, Alexander equalled it to the Persian "Hazârapatis" politico-military office of grand vizier or prime minister) VIII, 120, 140

**Chorasmia** (land on Oxus river; today Uzbekistan/Turkmenistan; conquered by Alexander) 152

**Chrysostomos, Saint John** (347–407 AD; patriarch

of Constantinople, preached against “Alexander superstitions”)

**Cilicia** (= Kilikia, see id.) 3, 42, 69, 130, 138

**Cleopatra VII** (69–30 BC, descendant of Ptolemy and pharaoh of Egypt by decision of Julius Caesar, whose only son she bore in 47 BC; later, she became the mother of three children for Mark Anthony. In regional conflicts, she used to side with the women, as shown by documents in the cases of Aba in Olba, and of Alexandra in Judea. For both political and emotional reasons, queen Zenobia of Palmyra later claimed descent from Cleopatra) 3, 35, 60, 61, 62, 75, 129, 131–132, 135

**Cleophis** (Roman transliteration of the Sanscrit name ‘Kripa’ or Kleofis, Indian queen reinstated by Alexander in 326 BC. The author Orosius, in 3.19.1, calls her “Cleophylis”, thus increasing the similitude with the name of Cleopatra. Experts deduce that Roman writers like Curtius, Justin and Orosius invented this parallel to exploit the ‘depraved Oriental queen’ image built up by Augustus’ propaganda machine against Cleopatra. See: Kleofis) 34–35

**Crete** (= Kreta; Greek island, in ancient times a naval empire under the Minos dynasty c. 2000–1500 BC; also in later centuries, the rulers of Kreta and Karia maintained close relations) 56, 77, 154

**Croesus** (595–546 BC; famously rich king of Lydia in 560–547 BC until Cyrus the Great conquered

his capital, Sardès. Croesus had donated the Temple of Artemis in Efesos, considered the Seventh Wonder of the Ancient World. Darius I of Persia copied the monetary system on which Lydia's prosperity was based) 137

**Cunaxa/Kunaxa** (site of the battle on Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> 401 BC, some 70 kms north of Babylon, between Cyrus the Younger and Artaxerxes II, in which Cyrus was killed) 69, 109

**Curtius, Quintus Rufus** (10 BC - 53 AD; Roman pro-consul in Africa; historian who, in times of emperor Claudius, published a hostile –in reality, ‘anti-emperor’– biography of Alexander, based on Kleitarchos, Diodoros and Trogus) 15, 21, 35, 36, 40, 140, 141, 155, 156, 160, 161

**Cyinda** (Kilikia treasury where Alexander placed over 10,000 talents for his planned campaign against Carthago) 130

**Cynnane/Kunnanè** (357–321 BC, daughter of Philip and Audata; Alexander's half-sister and mother of Adeas. Married to Philip's nephew Amyntas, but widowed in 336 BC. After Alexander's death she led her own army to Asia Minor with the aim to set her daughter on the throne. Though she was murdered on Perdikkas' order, her objective was fulfilled by the marriage of Adeas to Arridaios. Polyainos VIII.60: “The daughter of Philip was famous for her military knowledge: she conducted armies, and in the field charged at the head of them. In an engagement with the Illyrians, she with her own



hand slew Kaeria their queen.” <Family Tree: XI>) 2, 15–17, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 119, 120, 124, 135, 159

**Cyprus** (island in Eastern Mediterranean) 80, 81, 130

**Cyrene** (=Lybia; grain-rich city founded c. 630 BC as a colony of the Greek island town Thera. Kleopatra and Olympias organise grain imports c. 332 BC from Cyrene to combat famine) 91, 151

**Cyropaedia** (c. 380 BC, book on Cyrus the Great written by Xenofon) 44, 111, 163

**Cyrus the Great** (c. 576–529 BC; founder of Persian empire. His Elamite name, Kurush, means “He who bestows fortune/care”, sic Kuhrt 2007. His tomb on the plains of Pasargadai, site of his first victory over the Medes <whose capital he captured in 549 BC>, is admired by visitors still today, as it was by Alexander in 331 BC. When he returned in 324, he found the tomb sacked and damaged; he ordered his engineer Aristoboulos to repair it. Cyrus the Great had found his death on the battlefield in 529 when he lost his war against queen Tomyris of the Massagetai tribe, an episode that may have inspired Amazon-like legends in the East) VIII, IX, 8, 12, 20, 25, 35, 38, 41, 44–46, 56, 65, 67, 68, 77, 111, 137

**Cyrus the Younger** (424?-401 BC; son of Darius *the Bastard* and Parysatis; viceroy in Asia Minor, died on the Kunaxa battlefield trying to topple his brother Artaxerxes II) 69, 70, 73, 109

## D:

**Damascus** (ancient city in the Middle East, now capital of Syria) VII, 18, 56, 120, 138

***Darab-Nama*** (Persian epic poem of long oral tradition, first written down in the 12<sup>th</sup> century; Muslim interpretation of Alexander and Anahita) 13, 45–46, 58, 142, 159

**Darik** (coin of 8 grams of gold, introduced c. 500 BC by Darius I; in use, mostly in the western part of the empire, until 330 BC) 29, 91, 136–137

**Darius I the Great** (b. 550, distant relative of Cyrus the Great; led a coup against the ‘rebel’ king Bardiya/Gautama/Smerdis, and reigned 522–486 BC. He reorganized and strengthened the empire. Over time, Darius married: 1) Apame, daughter of Gobryas who governed Babylon, one of the Six that helped Darius I to seize the throne; they had three sons, but their first-born did not become king. 2) Faedymie, daughter of Otanes, another of the Six; they had no sons. Greek literary tradition makes her play an implausible role in the coup. She is cited with her Old Persian name Upandush on PF NN 2176, a tomb offering in the 20ieth. regnal year of Darius. 3) Atossa, eldest daughter of Cyrus; she bore him four sons of whom the eldest, Xerxes, became king. 3) Irtashtuna/Artystone, youngest daughter of Cyrus; she bore him two sons. 4) Parmys, daughter of Bardiya; she bore him one son. 6) Fratagune, daughter of Darius’ brother Artanes, probably a marriage to keep family

property united; she bore him two sons) VII, IX, 24, 38, 45, 46, 59, 66, 67, 68, 72, 73, 74, 78, 109, 111, 136, 137, 138

**Darius II** (nicknamed “The Bastard”; r. 423–405 BC; husband of Parysatis) <Family Tree: > IX, 58, 68, 70

**Darius III** (= Artashata; born 380 BC; Sisygambis’ son; champion against the Kadoussians 344 BC; under Artaxerxes III, satrap of Armenia in 344–336 BC; reigned as High King 336–330 BC; defeated and succeeded by Alexander) <Family Tree: X> VII, IX, 1, 2, 3, 8, 15, 18, 19, 20, 24, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 58, 75, 101, 103, 112, 113, 144, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 160

**Dâryavaush** (= Darius, see *ibidem*; Old Persian king name meaning “He who reestablishes rightful order”)

**Daurises** (Persian general, married to a daughter of Darius I; c 500 BC, appointed leader of an expeditionary force sent to subdue Karia, but killed in ambush) 78

**Deinon** (Greek historian who wrote a *Persikè* c. 330 BC; father of Kleitarchos) 140, 155

**Deiokes/Daiukku** (c. 715–650 BC; first king of the Medes, founder of the empire’s spy service) 110

**Delphi/Delfoi** (major sanctuary of the god Apollo on Mount Parnassus in central Greece, site of the Delphic Oracle, the most important shrine in the classical Greek world. Alexander visits the oracle in 335 BC on his return voyage from the League

of Corinth assembly, that has made him *Hegemon* for the war against Persia) VII, 2, 13–14, 92

**Demetrios *Poliorketes*** (= “the city-taker”; 337–283 BC; son of Antigonos *One-Eye*, active in Successor Wars) 95, 108, 127

**Demetrios** (disgruntled member of Alexander’s bodyguard, tried to organize a conspiracy in 330 BC with Dimnos and others, to kill Alexander; Filotas knew it, but didn’t report on it, and was executed because of this cover-up) VII

**Demokedes** (c. 530 BC Greek doctor/spy? for Atossa) 66, 67

**Demosthenes** (b. 384, suicide 332 BC; Athenian demagogue, enemy of Alexander and Philip; received payments from Persia) 113, 139

**Dendera** (on the Nile, 50 kms north from Luxor; in reliefs on the south wall of its main temple dedicated to the goddess Hathor, Cleopatra VII is shown accompanied by Ptolemy XV Caesarion as co-ruler) 131

***Descent of Inanna*** (Sumerian gospel about the goddess Inanna) 51, 54

***Dhu’l-Qarnain*** (= “Two Horned”, Alexander’s oriental nickname; cited by the prophet Muhammad in the Koran) 10, 145–146

**Diana** (Roman goddess equated to Artemis. ‘Diana of Ekbatana’ = Anahita. A successor deity to the Great Goddess, as the name may in part reflect. AN or ANNA is Sumerian for “Heaven”. Thus: Inanna, or Nin-Anna, “Lady of Heaven”; likewise, the Roman goddess would be ‘Di-anna’, in which

the root *Anna* denotes life-giving divinity) 55

**Dimnos** (c. 330 BC co-conspirator; his suicide, when persecuted, was presented as proof of the murder attempt against Alexander) VII

**Dio Cassius** (164–235 AD, consul of Rome 229 AD; his *Historiae Romanae* 75.13.1 mention the decision of emperor Septimus Severus to close the Alexander Tomb in Alexandria ‘for security reasons’) 157

**Diodoros of Sicily** (c. 100–20 BC, historian from Agyrium on Sicily who travelled extensively through Europe, Egypt and Asia; in 60–30 BC he published a *Historical Library*, but most of its books are now lost) 11, 14, 25, 35, 36, 43, 48, 95, 96, 99, 130, 140, 141, 142, 155, 156, 158, 163

**Diogenes** (413–323 BC; famous ‘cynic’ philosopher in Athens and Corinth, where Alexander paid him a short visit in 335 BC) VII, 139

**Dionysios** (since 337 BC tyrant/king of Herakleia Pontos in Asia Minor; active promotor of grain exports to Greece, he litigated in Athens about a shipment. A friend of Kleopatra, though after 314 he felt obliged to become a formal ally of Antigonos *One-Eye*. In 323, he had married princess Amastris, granddaughter of Sisygambis. He died in 306 BC, leaving the government of Herakleia in the hands of his widow queen Amastris) 92, 93, 103, 104, 105

**Dodona** (capital of Molossia and birthplace of Olympias, 20 km SW from present-day Ioannina.

Since the early 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, the site of a sanctuary of the Great Goddess as *Gaia* <=mother Earth>, with a sacred oak and oracle; c. 1400 BC the Olympian Zeus was added, who later took over the famous oracle. As late as 362 AD, emperor Julian the Apostate still consulted this oracle for his campaign against the Persians) 29, 87, 91, 92

**Doryforoi** (An elite corps of staff officers, also known as The Immortals. Greek name for the Persian top officers who guarded the High King; their ceremonial lance had a golden knob at the foot, which is why the Greeks called them “gold-carriers”. In Alexander’s reign, the highest-ranking *Doryforos* was prince Oxyathres, second son of Sisygambis; possibly he also held the office of *Eye of the King*) 113

**Drachma** (monetary unit in Athens/Greece. Normal one-day pay for a common soldier. 7 drachmai per week or 30 per month would equal a present-day minimum wage. 6000 drachmai = 1 “talent” equiv. to 26,2 kg of silver; see: Talent) 79, 136

**Drangae** (people in the lands south of Hindu Kush in today’s Afghanistan; conquered by Alexander) 152

**Drypetis**, princess (339–323 BC; Sisygambis’ granddaughter; Hefaistion’s wife; killed on Roxane’s orders in 323 BC) 2, 3, 23, 24, 47, 159

**Dumuzi** (Sumerian mythological shepherd/ husband of goddess Inanna) 52, 54

**Duris, tyrant of Samos** (c. 350–270 BC; wrote on

Greek and Makedonian history, but only some 30 fragments of his works survive; author cited by Plutarch) 95, 99, 141, 155, 156, 160

## **E:**

**Éfesos** (Ionian city bordering on Karia; site of Great Goddess/Artemis temple considered the Seventh Wonder of the Ancient World. This building had been partly financed by king Croesus. A much earlier shrine dedicated to Artemis had been set up in Efesos, legend holds, by Otrera queen of Amazons; her daughter, by the war-god Ares, was Penthesileia, who took part in the Trojan war) ) VI, 56, 78

**Egypt** (Egyptian oracle/religion; priestesses in Egypt; Egypt's tax payments to Persia; rebellions against Persia) VII, IX, 3, 14, 15, 17, 25, 41, 44, 46, 54, 60–63, 68, 75, 77, 78, 81, 94, 112, 120, 124, 127, 129, 131–132, 135, 136, 137, 138, 151, 154, 156, 158, 163

**Ekbatana** (modern-day Hamadan, ancient capital of Media; site where Alexander guarded most of his conquered treasury, and where Hefaistion resided as 'prime minister') VII, VIII, 2, 12, 15, 55, 104, 110, 112, 117, 138

**Elam** (old kingdom with capital in Susa, taken over by Persia c 630 BC) IX, 55

**Enheduanna** (2300–2245 BC daughter of king Sargon of Akkad, who sent her as high priestess to conquered Sumer to try and promote the integration of his new empire. She resided in the

ancient city of Ur where writing had been invented, and is the first writer known by name in world literature, as author of hymns to the goddess Inanna. In reality, Enheduanna is not exactly a name but a Sumerian title meaning “high priestess of the main beauty in heaven”) 51

**Enki** (Sumerian god who made Inanna’s return from the Underworld possible) 52

**Epaminondas** (418–362 BC, the Theban general who taught Philip of Makedon about tactics, strategy and the importance of the Persian empire) 88

**Epigonoi** (= “Successors”: 30,000 Baktrian recruits/ hostages in an army unit created by Alexander in 327 BC)

**Epiktetos** (c.50–125 AD; Greek philosopher who taught Arrian and the future emperor Hadrian) 139, 155

**Epimeleia/prostasia** (royal tutelage of the boy-king Alexander IV) 25

**Episkopos** (in the 5<sup>th</sup> century Delian League, Athenian equivalent of the “King’s Eye”, see id.) 114

**Epyaxa** (reigned c. 400 BC as queen/co-ruler of Kilikia) 3, 69

**Erech/Uruk** (city on the Euphrates in southern Sumeria; its patron goddess is Inanna) 52

**Ereshkigal** (Sumerian goddess of Underworld, sister of Inanna) 52, 54

**Erzinjan** (town in N-E Anatolia on the north bank of the Qara-sū, one of the headwaters of the



Euphrates, at an altitude of 1,200 m. Site of Anahita temple) 55

**Euphrates** (river; as region of Great Goddess worship) 59, 111

**Euia** (border valley between Molossia and Makedon, where in 317 BC an army led by queen Adea and co-King Arridaios was meant to stop Olympias' advance on Pella; but their soldiers went over to Olympias) 95, 99

**Eumenes of Kardia** (362–316 BC; Greek Royal Secretary of Philip II and Alexander; like Olympias, openly hostile to Antipater; wrote, but partly falsified, the *Diaries* of Alexander's campaign; after Alexander's death, named satrap of Cappadocia and turned general; finally defeated and killed by Antigonos) 2, 27, 83, 93, 94, 95, 118, 120, 121, 124, 139, 140, 141, 154, 155, 156, 159, 163

**Eurydike** <1> (c. 520 BC, mother of Makedon's first famous king: Alexander I, who reigned in 498–454 BC) <Family Tree: XI>

**Eurydike** <2> (c.410-c.350 BC, mother of Philip of Makedon; c. 368 BC she obtained military support from the Athenian general Ifikrates to beat off the pretenders who tried to oust her sons from the throne of Makedon. Prof. E. Carney evaluates: "Not only did Eurydike intervene in a public and aggressive way on behalf of her sons, playing dynastic politics with some skill, but her dedications of temples around Aigai [present-day Vergina] also speak to a new public role for

Argead women. Eurydike succeeded in her goals: all the remaining rulers of the Argead dynasty were her descendants.” <Family Tree: XI>) 3, 28, 85, 86–87, 90, 93, 159

**Eurydike** <3> (name given by Philip II to his last bride, who was executed in 336 BC on Olympias’ order <Family Tree: XI>) 90, 91

**Eurydike** <4> (name taken on by Philip’s granddaughter Adea after 321 BC, when she became queen of Makedon by marrying her uncle Arridaios <Family Tree: XI>) 99, 119

**Eurylochos** (Makedonian soldier once cited by Plutarch as the man who in 324 BC asks for false invalidity leave in order to accompany the hetaira Telesippa) 161

**Eusebios of Caesarea** (260–340 AD Fenician bishop and historian) 77

“**Exiles’ Decree**” (promulgated Aug., 324 BC: Alexander ordered Greek city-states to readmit political exiles; they were supposed to be his partisans) VIII, 92

## **F:**

**Fenicia** (seafaring nation on the Levant coast of the Eastern Mediterranean, with cities like Tyre, Sidon, Byblos and Beritos/Beirut) VII, 42, 46, 77, 81, 129, 130

**Filippos of Calchis** (Greek author; his lost works cited by Plutarch) 141

**Filippos of Makedon** (king Philip II, b. 382, reigned 359–336, political and strategic genius

who turned his small country into the major military power of his times. Father of Alexander. His marriages were famous both as diplomatic successes and domestic fiascos; the prime source is Satyros, as quoted by Athenaios in *Deipnosophistas* 557 b-e: "Philip always married a new wife with each war he undertook. "In the twenty-two years of his reign, at any rate," as Satyros says in his *Life of him*, "he married Audata of Illyria, and had by her a daughter, Cynna; he also married Fila, a sister of Derdas and Machatas. Wishing to put in a claim to the Thessalian nation as his own besides others, he begot children by two women of Thessaly, one of whom was Nikesipolis of Ferai, who bore to him Thessalonike, while the other was Filinna of Larisa, by whom he became the father of Arrhidaios. In addition, he took possession of the Molossian kingdom by marrying Olympias, by whom he had Alexander and Kleopatra, and when he subjugated Thrace, there came over to his side Kothelas the Thracian king, who brought with him his daughter Meda and a large dowry. By marrying her also he thus brought home a second wife after Olympias. After all these women he married Kleopatra, with whom he had fallen in love, the sister of Hippostratos and niece of Attalos; and by bringing her home to supplant Olympias, he threw the entire course of his life into utter confusion. Kleopatra, in her turn, bore to Philip a daughter, the one who was called

Europa.” <Family Tree: XI>) VI, VII, 6, 9, 16, 18, 22, 29, 30, 81, 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 97, 113, 119, 134, 135, 145, 154, 156

**Filippeion** (civic centre/gymnasion in Halikarnassos, repaired in 281 BC with Ptolemaic funds; named after the ‘Filippeion’ built c. 336 BC at Olympia and decorated by the Athenian sculptor Leochares, to the order of king Philip, see: Philippeion) 90

**Filippos of Theangela** in Karia (historian cited by Plutarch) 141

**Filon of Thebes** (Greek author cited by Plutarch) 141

**Filostratos the Athenian** (170–247 AD, general and writer who accompanied the Roman emperor Caracalla to his negotiations with Parthia) 114, 157

**Filotas** (360–330 BC; son of Parmenion, sent to warn Philip of Alexander’s dealings with the Karian king Pixodaro; later, executed for not reporting on a murder conspiracy against Alexander) VII, 90

**Filoxenos** <1> (c. 330 BC treasurer in Sardès; early 323 led Karian troops sent as reinforcements to Alexander in Babylonia) 83

**Filoxenos** <2> (c. 300 BC famous Greek painter)

**Firdausi, Hakim Abu-l-Qasem** (935–1020 AD, author of Persia’s national epic *Shah-Nama*) 144, 145

**Frygia** (satrapy in Asia Minor; capital: Gordion) VII

**Fylarchos** (historian in Athens whose work covers

the period 272–220 BC) 157

## G:

**Gabiene** (battle of id. in 316 BC, near present-day Isfahan; Antigonos *One-Eye* won, Eumenes was captured and later killed; Peukestas lost his post of satrap in Persis)

**Gadatas** (trusted vassal of Darius the Great) 111

**Gadrosia** (= Makran, coastal desert between India and Persia; here Alexander lost half his army to thirst and starvation) VIII, 152

**Gaia** (=“Mother Earth”: name given to the Great Goddess in the Molossian capital Dodona, where she had a sanctuary since the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, site of the sacred oak and oracle taken over by the Zeus cult c. 1400 BC) 29

**Gandara** (region between Baktra and the Indus river; Hefaistion led the army on this march) VIII

**Gaugamela** (hamlet in northern Mesopotamia; on October 1<sup>st</sup> 331 BC, site of the battle that meant the definitive rout of Darius III; sometimes called “battle of Arbela” after the nearest city) VII, 15, 20, 42, 43

**Gaushaka** (Persian title for the *King’s Ears* = spies/informers) 112

**Gaza** (city in Palestine, captured 332 BC by Alexander. In 312 BC, at a battle near Gaza between Antigonos and Ptolemy&Seleukos, king Abdalonymos of Sidon died) VII, 29, 91, 128

**Geshtinanna** (Sumerian mythological sister of Dumuzi, see id.; she substitutes him in the

Underworld every half year) 52

**Gigis** (servant of queen Parysatis, c. 400 BC executed on the accusation of procuring poison to kill queen Stateira, the mother of Sisygambis) 71

**Glaukias** (Greek doctor, executed in 324 BC as guilty of Hefaistion's death) 117, 118

**Gordion** (capital of Frygia) /Gordian knot undone by Alexander, so fulfilling prophesy of dominion over Asia) VII

**Granikos** river (334 BC battle at id. in NW Asia Minor; Arsites, satrap of Ionia and nominal leader of the Persian army, having neglected to reinforce his troops in time, as the mercenary general Memnon had advised him to do, was responsible for the Persian rout and killed himself) VII, 40

**Great Goddess /Great Mother** (ancient sole deity) III, 29, 33, 37, 46, 53, 54, 58, 59, 60, 78, 80, 88, 95, 132

**Gud-gal-anna** (Sumerian mythological husband of the Underworld queen, goddess Ereshkigal; also, Sumerian name of a stellar constellation) 53

**H:**

**Hadrian** (76–138 AD; Roman emperor, visited the Alexander Tomb in 130 AD; friend and patron of the Greco-Roman author Arrian) 62, 137, 139, 155

**Hagnothemis** (c. 320 BC confidant of Antigonos *One-Eye* who 'leaked' that Antigonos had proof that Alexander was poisoned by Iollas and

Kassander)

**Hakhâmanish** (see: Achaemenes; legendary Persian king c. 700 BC; founder of the Achaemenid Dynasty) IX, 1, 3, 8, 17, 24, 25, 26, 32, 36, 38, 41, 43, 46, 48, 59, 65, 73, 75, 78, 90, 110, 112, 113, 114, 128, 137, 145

**Halikarnassos** (capital of Karia, present-day Bodrum in S-E Turkey) VII, 31, 33, 77, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84

**Harpalos** (355–324 BC; Alexander's boyhood friend, exiled by Philip because of the Pixodaro affair. Alexander's treasurer in Babylon; in 325 he fled with part of the Persian hoard to Athens, where both Antipater and Olympias lodged claims to have him turned over. Harpalos then fled to Crete, where he was killed by brigands the next year) 90

**Hathor** (ancient Egyptian goddess, protectress of cattle and later of all living beings –usually depicted with a cow's head–; in the end, often superseded /supplanted by Isis, who assumed all her powers. At the Hathor temple in Dendera, Cleopatra VII had Caesarion depicted as co-ruler) 131

**Hatshepsut** (1508–1458 BC, pharaoh for 22 years as from 1479 BC, one of the most successful rulers of Egypt's history, also in economic matters. She gave orders to re-excavate the Nile-Red Sea canal that had originally been dug by Senusset III c. 1850 BC through the Wadi Tumilat/'Bitter Lakes' depression. It was in full use in Alexander's days)

**Hefaistion** (357–323 BC, Alexander's boyhood friend, lover, general, brother-in-law and 'prime minister'. Exclusively for Hefaistion, his military rank of *chiliarch* was made equivalent to grand vizier or prime minister. Alexander spent 12,000 talents on his funeral. Bereft by Hefaistion's premature death, Alexander sent embassies to oracles asking if Hefaistion could be revered as a god. "Only as a hero", they answered, but that was sufficient to allow the two lovers to be reunited in the Underworld) VI, VII, VIII, 2, 3, 5, 8, 15, 24, 26, 28, 36, 37, 40, 89, 104, 117–118, 140

**Hegemon** (Greek politico-military leadership title used by Philip and Alexander as rulers of the League of Corinth) VII, 13, 15, 44, 154

**Hekatomnos** (reigned 392–377 BC; king/satrap of Karia; father of queen Ada) 30, 31, 80, 81

**Hellanike** (= Lanike, see id.; born c. 378 BC; sister of Kleitos the Black and Alexander's nurse/nanny during his childhood years in Pella) 160

**Henkelman, Wouter F.M.** (professor of Elamite language and history, expert on the Achaemenid empire; member of the research team for the publication of c. 7000 Elamite texts from the Persepolis Fortification archive. Dr Henkelman holds research and teaching posts at the Netherlands Institute for the Near East and the VU University of Amsterdam; the German Archaeological Institute (Berlin); the Ecole



Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Paris); and the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago) 134, 163

**Hellespont** (=Dardanelles, sea-arm separating Europe and Asia) 16, 17, 20, 93, 121, 128, 151

**Herakleia Pontos** (kingdom of Dionysios and Amastris in Paflagonia, NW-Asia Minor) 47, 49, 92, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 157, 158

**Hera** (Greek successor deity to the Great Goddess, later proclaimed wife of Zeus) 54, 59

**Herakles** (the Greek halfgod, son of Zeus) 10, 13

**Herakles** (327–309 BC, Alexander's son by Barsine the concubine; born on the campaign trail in Baktria; betrayed and murdered by Polyperchon in 309 BC) 3, 20, 24, 25, 95

**Herodotos** of Halikarnassos (484– 435 BC; Ionian Greek author, called “Father of History”. His main theme is the heroic victory of the Greeks over the Persian empire. Herodotos fails to mention the real reason why Xerxes did not complete his conquest of Greece: part of the invasion army sent to the West was forced to return to Persia, to smash a massive revolt in Babylonia in 482/481 BC. See also: Xerxes) VI, 33, 66, 67, 68, 72, 79, 110, 138, 163

**Hermolaos** (327 BC disgruntled page and failed assassin of Alexander) 34

**Hidrieus** (351–344 BC king/satrap of Karia; brother and husband of Ada) 31, 32, 78, 81, 82

**Hieronimos** of Kardia (c. 350–250 BC; politician and historian; relative of Eumenes, with whom

he may have worked for Alexander's secretariat; later, envoy of Antigonos *One-Eye*; around 265 BC, he published his *History of the Successor Wars*) 140, 155, 156, 159, 160

**Hindu Kush** (= "Killer of Hindi's/Indians", high pass in Pamir range) VII, VIII

**Hipparchos** (in 335 BC, commander of Thrakian soldiers at the sack of Thebes, killed by his rape victim Timokleia) 9

**Hippolyta** (legendary priestess of the Great Goddess and queen of the Amazons whom Theseus took with him as his wife to Athens, so provoking an Amazon invasion against Attika) 10, 46, 79, 142

**Homer** (the immortal poet of the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BC, <main> author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssee*) VI, 5, 8, 10, 77, 88, 134

**Hüsing, Georg** prof. (1869–1930 German orientologist, expert on Mesopotamian queens) 73

**Hutaosâ** (= Atossa, see *ibid.*) 3, 38, 45, 59, 65, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74, 163

**Huxshaqra** (Old Persian, in Avesta meaning "Of good reign" = Oxyatres, see *ibid.*)

**Hydaspes** (= Jhelum river in present-day Pakistan) VIII, 152

**Hyfasis** (= Beas river in present-day Punjab; in 326 BC, Alexander's army refused to cross this river and advance further into India) VIII, 152

**Hypereides** (politician in Athens, in 323 BC celebrated the poisoning of Alexander, and was

later executed for it) 123

**Hyrcania** (coastal region of the Caspian Sea, to the east of Armenia; satrapy of Artasyras; then conquered by Alexander, and later included in the Parthian empire) 109, 152

**Hystaspes** (Achaemenid prince whose wife, captured in 330, was immediately returned by Alexander) 2, 8, 160

## **I:**

**Ifikrates** (c. 415–353 BC, Athenian general; improved army mobility; scored victories over Sparta, and pushed back the Illyrians at the request of queen Eurydike of Makedon; in 378 BC, led Greek mercenaries in a Persian campaign against Egypt) 28, 86

***Iliad*** (epic by Homer on the war of Troy) VI, 10

**Illyria** (aprox. present-day Albania; warlike, rival neighbor kingdom to Makedon) VI, 16, 86, 88, 89, 90, 135, 154

**Inanna /Nin-Anna** (“Lady of Heavens”, title of the Great Goddess in the pantheon of Sumer; later, as one of her successors, visible in the night sky as Ninsianna = Venus, she was said to be daughter of the the moon Nanna-Suen and sister of the sun Uru. Inanna maintained the ‘office’ of the Great Goddess of “Giver of Kingship”; also, she was the goddess of sexual love, like Afrodite/Venus in Greek and Roman times. In Akkad, she was equated to Ishtar/Esther, and in Fenicia, to Astarté) III, 37, 51–54, 55

**India** (country invaded by Alexander in 327 BC; Indian tax payments to the Persian empire) VIII, IX, 3, 10, 14, 22, 27, 33, 34, 102, 107, 118, 125, 128, 129, 136, 138, 139, 140, 142, 149, 151, 152, 156

**Indus** (river) VIII, 152

**Iollas/Iolaus** (Kassander's brother and Alexander's cupbearer. Olympias desecrated his grave in 317, probably because she had by then been informed of Hagnothemis saying that Iollas had administered poison – brought by Kassander– to Alexander) 95, 99, 123

**Ionian** (Greek part of Asia Minor; Persians called the whole of Greece 'Yauna', and all Greeks 'Yaunas') VI, VII, IX, 2, 6, 16, 18, 19, 30, 56, 78, 80, 89, 90, 151

**Ipsos** (301 BC battle in central Asia Minor, where Antigonos *One-Eye* died, defeated by Lysimachos, Seleukos and Ptolemy) 104, 108, 125, 128

**Iqbal-Nama** (second part of Nizami's *Sikandar-nama, e Bara*) 145

**Irdabama** (c. 500 BC, Old Persian name of the queen-mother of Darius I; in the many references to her that appear on the tablets of the Persepolis Fortification Archive, she carries a title, "Abbamush", not yet deciphered. She had her own administrative facilities, equal to those of the king, and actively directed her numerous estates and factories in Babylon and southern Persia) 3, 68, 74

**Irtashduna** (= Artystone; c. 535–490 BC, youngest

daughter of Cyrus, favourite wife of Darius I and mother of princess Artazostre. Her name derives from Old Persian “Rta-stuna”, pillar of Arta; “Irtashduna” is the Elamite form of the same name. Her title given on Persepolis Fortification tablets is “dukshish” = royal woman. On the tablets, Irtashduna features prominently: six orders with her personal seal plus two other tablets record transactions at her various estates located in Urandush, Kukkannakan and Matannan) 3, 67, 68

**Ishtar** (goddess of sex and war in Uruk; in Babylon, the transfiguration of Inanna; later, in the Persian empire, an equivalent of Anahita) 54, 55

**Iskandar/Sikandar** (Oriental version of Alexander’s name) 10, 146

**Istakhr** (near Persepolis, site of the principal Anahita temple of the Sassanids, where their kings were crowned) 56, 58

**Ister** (author cited by Plutarch) 141

**Isis** (Egyptian Mother Goddess, with main temple on Philae near Assuan) 54, 60–63, 132

**Iskandar Muda** (= “Young Alexander”; c. 1620 AD Muslim sultan of Aceh on the NW-Indonesian island of Sumatra) 146

**Isokrates** (436–338 BC, from Athens; famous rhetorician and teacher; proposed Philip as leader of united Hellenes to liberate Ionia; his pupil Theopompos proposed Alexander for the same role)

**Issos** (on November 5<sup>th</sup> 333 BC, battlefield, in the

present-day SE corner of Turkey, of Alexander's first direct triumph over Darius III; in consequence, the place where he first encountered the Persian queen-mother Sisygambis) VII, 18, 19, 20, 26, 36, 37, 39, 41, 82, 91, 113

## **J:**

**Jaxartes/Syr Darya** (Central Asian river running towards the Aral Sea) 141

**Jhelum** (= Hydaspes, river in India/Pakistan, ver ibid.) VIII, 152

**Justin/Justinus, Marcus** (4<sup>th</sup> century AD Roman writer who abridged and 'embellished' 1<sup>st</sup> cent. Pompeius Trogus' *History of Alexander* based on Kleitarchos) 35, 141, 156

**Justinianus** (482–565 AD, the Christian emperor who closed down the Isis temples at Philae) 63

## **K:**

**Kadmeia** (b. 335 BC, daughter of Kleopatra and the Molossian king Alexander) 91

**Kadoussians** (nomad tribe near Caspian Sea; Artashata, the later Darius III, defeated their champion in a duel in 343 BC) 38

**Kaeria** (queen of Illyrians, killed on the battlefield by Cynnane) 16, 89

**Kallisthenes** (370–327 BC, a writer married to a niece of Aristoteles, and official historian of Alexander's army, until his arrest in connection with the failed 'Pages Conspiracy'. The sources

disagree whether he was executed immediately or succumbed to illness in prison. Anyway, his death sharpened the Athenian academic bias against Alexander) VIII, 12, 139, 140, 141, 149, 154, 155

**Kallixeina** (=“Beautiful Stranger”; c. 340 BC, professional alias of a call-girl from Larissa in Thessaly, hired by Olympias to initiate teenager Alexander in sex with women. Athenaios in *Deipnosophistas*, X 435a, cites Theophrastos, an Athenian academic author openly hostile to Alexander: “Hieronymos, in his Epistles, quotes Theophrastos as saying that Alexander was not well disposed to sexual love. Olympias, at any rate, and Philip, were aware of this, and actually caused the Thessalian courtesan Kallixeina, who was a very beautiful woman, to lie with him; for they feared he might prove to be *gynnis* [womanish], and Olympias often begged him to have intercourse with Kallixeina”) 2, 5, 6, 7, 160

**Kampaspe** (c. 334 BC, a hetaira and Alexander’s first known regular bedmate. He asked her to pose nude for a portrait by the famous painter Apelles, who fell in love with her, and received her as a gift from Alexander. Her Thessalian name Kampaspe –she came from Larissa– was Atticised into “Pancaspe” by later authors like Pliny the Elder who wrote: “Alexander, in his admiration of her extraordinary beauty, engaged Apelles to paint the most beloved of all his concubines, called Pancaspe, naked...”) 2, 7, 8,

**Kandace** (= Candace, see *ibid.*) 36, 61

**Karia** (in its original, Luwian language: Karuwa = “High Mountain Country”: kingdom/satrapy around Halikarnassos, present-day Bodrum in SW-Turkey; see: Ada I queen of Karia) VI, VII, 2, 3, 6, 7, 30–33, 39, 77–84, 87, 90, 162

**Karthasis** (Scythian leader who in 330 BC offered Alexander his daughter for bride) 2, 11

**Kassandane** (c. 570–538 BC; Achaemenid royal lady, queen of the Persian empire as wife of Cyrus the Great; the *Nabonidus Chronicle* registers public mourning for the king’s wife in Babylon on 21–26<sup>th</sup> of March, 538; Boyce suggests that Kassandane was then buried in Pasargadai, near Cyrus’ tomb, in the so-called Zendan-e-Solayman tower) 3, 65, 66, 75

**Kassander** (358–297 BC; Antipater’s son, later king of Makedon; ordered the murders of Olympias, of Barsine and Herakles, and of Roxane and her son. Athenaeus I.17 gossips that at age 35 Kassander still had to sit up, instead of reclining on a couch, at his father’s dinners, because Makedonian custom allowed this honour only to men who had speared their own wild boar, a feat which Kassander had been unable to accomplish) 17, 25, 94, 95, 99, 100, 106, 120, 123, 124, 127

**Kentake** (title of the queen-mother in the Meroitic period of Nubia /Kush (593 BC - 350 AD); wall carvings excavated in its capital Meroé prove that in 177–155 BC, the *Kentake* Shanakdakhete



already held sole sovereign power. Roman authors registered the series of *Kentaktes* contemporaneous with the Caesars. Nawidemak and Amanikhabale c. 50– 40 BC, coincided with Julius Caesar. The one-eyed Amanirenas, 40–10 BC, fought against (but later signed the peace with) Augustus; a treaty upheld by her successor Amanishaketo, 10–1 BC. The next *Kentaktes* Amanitare, Amanitarakide, Amanimemide and Amanikhatasan reigned until 85 AD and so coincided with Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero and Vespasian. Roman authors transliterated the queen-mother's title as "Candace". The 'Romance' literary tradition, probably inspired by the real Kleofis episode, invented a meeting and love affair of Alexander with a Candace) 61, 62

**"King's Eye" /*Spathaka*** (title of chief of Persia's secret service) 37, 109–114

**Kilikia** (satrapy on the SE-coast of Asia Minor facing Cyprus; c. 400, ruled by queen Epyaxa and her husband. Kilikia became the principal Persian stronghold to control Asia Minor, and Artaxerxes II appointed Mazday <Mazaios> as its governor. The castle of Cyinda in Kilikia was the main treasury deposit in the region for the Persian kings. Alexander, too, put here the war chest for Krateros' campaign against Carthago) 3, 42, 69, 130, 138

**Kleitarchos** (330–280 BC? writer in Alexandria, son of the historian Deinon who c. 350 BC had published a *Persikè*; Kleitarchos produced c. 305

BC a best-selling book *About Alexander* that became the source of many Alexander books in the so-called 'Vulgate' style) 140, 141, 147, 155, 156

**Kleitos “the Black”** (380–327 BC; Makedonian general, crony of king Philip and brother of Hellanike, Alexander’s nurse/nanny. At the battle of the Granikos, Kleitos saved Alexander’s life from a Persian attack. Finally they fell out, however, and at the winter HQ of Samarkand, Kleitos was killed in drunken rage by Alexander) VIII

**Kleofis/Kripa** (c. 326 BC queen or Regent of the Massaga fortress in the Swat valley of present-day Pakistan. Professors R.K. Mukerjee and V.D. Majan report that her name in Sanskrit would be “Kripa”. There is no doubt about her historic character, but the different sources, some of them clearly biased, offer confusing descriptions. Even so, all agree that Alexander (re) established her on the throne after a bloody siege of the fortress city. The fact that the queen-mother accepted this appointment seems to void the ‘ultra-nationalist’ theory in some academic circles of India, who present her as a fiercely patriotic war leader against “Alexander’s bloodthirsty aggression”. Most experts agree, however, in rejecting the Roman-made scandal story about Kleofis. Authors like Curtius and Justin write of a sexual relation between Alexander and Kleofis, producing a son also called Alexander “who became king in

India". In Justin's characteristic sensationalist version, "Cleophis recovered her throne by acting as a royal whore". Academic analysis deduces that such Roman authors invented this image of Cleophis or Cleophylis to draw a parallel with Cleopatra, and so excite their public. The propaganda machine of Augustus had turned Cleopatra into 'the typical perverting Oriental sex monster'. Even today some people, specially in Hollywood, still believe in this 'sex bomb' image of Cleopatra VII. And it is highly probable, as Berve already pointed out, that this sensationalist description of Kleofis inspired the fictional love affair of Alexander with Candace in the *Romance* tradition. On the other hand it is noteworthy that the two sources most directly related to the Kleitarchos original, Diodoros and the Metz Epitome, contain no such slander against Kleofis. They present her as a dignified sovereign, much admired by Alexander, who decided to spend several days in her company; which sounds very similar to his long conversations with queen Ada of Karia and queen-mother Sisygambis of Persia) VIII, 3, 34–35, 160

**Kleopatra** (355–308 BC; Alexander's full sister, queen of Molossia and Alexander's 'dynastic representative' in Makedon; potentially capable of transmitting Alexander's throne rights by marrying any of the pretenders in the Successor Wars, which is why Antigonos *One-Eye* finally had her murdered in 308 to forestall her

marriage to Ptolemy. <Family Tree: XI> For her biography, see Chapter 5) VI, 1, 3, 29, 30, 85–96, 105, 120, 124, 125, 135, 160

**Koran** (the Muslim holy book, quoting the prophet Muhammad, who in Sura 18, verse 82–102, mentions Alexander as “the Two- Horned One whom Allah made powerful in the earth”) 145, 146

**Krateros** (370–321 BC; Makedonian general, married in Susa to Amastris) 2, 25, 27, 28, 94, 104, 105, 118, 119, 120, 124, 129, 130

**Kreta** (= Crete, see id.; Greek island, in ancient times naval empire under the Minos dynasty) 56, 77, 154

**Ktesias of Knidos** in Karia (c. 444–374 BC; court doctor of Artaxerxes II and author of books about the history and geography of Assyria, Persia and India – in the last case, most of it invented) 38, 44, 69, 71, 109, 158

**Kuhrt, Amélie** (Professor of Ancient Near Eastern History at Univeristy College London, and fellow of the British Academy. Also see [Reference Works on page 162](#)) 38, 44, 45, 134, 162

**Kunaxa/Cunaxa** (70 kms north from Babylon, site of 401 BC battle between Artaxerxes II and Cyrus the Younger) 69, 109

**Kunнанè** (= Cynnane, see id.) 2, 15–17, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 119, 120, 124, 135, 159

**L:**

**Labraunda/Labraynda** (temple for Zeus with

Labrys, in Karia) 78

**Labrys** (in Luwian: “Labra”; double-headed axe of the Amazons, sacred to the Great Goddess and later to Zeus Karios; national icon of the Karians, and of the Minoans on Crete where the “Labyrinth” stood) 77, 78

**Lada** (=Luwian word for “woman”; name of the Great Goddess/fertility deity in ancient Karia) 78

**Lamian War** (323 BC uprising in Greece, led by Athens, against Antipater; squashed by Krateros) 93

**Langaros** (king of the Agriani, expert mountaineer troops; long-standing allies of Alexander. He offered Cynnane for a bride to Langaros, who died however before the marriage could take place) 16, 91

**Lanike** (=Hellanike, born c. 378 BC, sister of Kleitos the Black; **Ath.IV.128** states she was Alexander’s nurse/nanny) 160

**Laomedon** (375–320 BC; Makedonian general, *somatofylax*, friend of Alexander, made satrap of Syria by Perdikkas) 36

**League of Corinth** (Greek alliance forged by Philip II after his victory at Chaironea in 338 BC, in which 18-year old Alexander distinguished himself routing Thebans and Athenians) VII, 15

**League of Delos/”Delian League”**: Athens’ 5<sup>th</sup> century ‘empire’) 114

**Leonnatos** (356–322 BC Makedonian general, *somatofylax* ; made satrap of Hellespont by Perdikkas; would-be bridegroom for Kleopatra,

he died in the Lamian war before the marriage could take place) 91, 93

**Leonidas** (c.350 BC; relative of Olympias who named him as young Alexander's tutor) VI, 88

**Leosthenes** (in 323 BC, Athenian leader of the failed 'Lamian' rebellion against Antipater/Krateros) 119

**Libanius** (314–394 AD) prolific Greco-Roman author, friend of pagan emperor Julian the Apostate; commented on Alexander's Tomb in Alexandria)

**Liber de Morte** (c. 309 BC; faked Last Will of Alexander the Great) 123–125, 145, 147, 156

**Linear A** (ancient Minoan script on clay tablets in Crete, in use from 18th. to 15th. century BC; similar in aspect to the Karian alphabet) 77

**Lucanus, Marcus** (36–65 AD Roman writer, described Caesar's visit to the Alexander Tomb)

**Luwian** (principal language in the Hittite Empire; attested since 2400 BC, precursor of Karian) 78

**Luxor** (see: Ammon Temple) 44

**Lydia** (kingdom of Croesus in Asia Minor with capital at Sardès, conquered in 547 BC by Cyrus the Great; then satrapy; in 322 BC, Kleopatra was named "commander" of its garrison by Perdikkas) 70, 93, 136, 151

**Lykia** (satrapy in southern Asia Minor) VII, 2, 125

**Lysander** (405 BC Spartan general, received code message)

**Lysimachos** (360–281 BC; Makedonian general, *somatofylax*; King of Thrace; married the

widowed queen Amastris in 302, then led the allied forces in the battle of Ipsos defeating Antigonos. To reinforce his military alliance with Ptolemy, married his daughter Arsinoe in 300 BC, causing Amastris to withdraw to Herakleia Pontos; Lysimachos died on the battlefield of Corupedion near Sardès, defeated by Seleukos) 94, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 121, 124, 125, 155

## **M:**

**Magians** (hereditary soothsayers from Media; they sat besides Alexander at the celebration banquet of Opis) 153

**Mallia/Multan** (Indian city where Peukestas saved Alexander's life in 325 with the 'Achilles shield') VIII

**Marakanda** (= city of Samarkand, in present-day Uzbekistan; in 328/7, Alexander's winter HQ, where in a drunken brawl he killed Kleitos "the Black") VIII

**Mary Renault** (author; see Renault, Mary) 10, 11, 163

**Massaga** (fortress city in the Swat valley, Pakistan; capital of Assacenians, routed by Alexander in 326 BC; he captured the city in a bloodbath, but reinstated the queen Kleofis/Kripa, see *ibid.*) VIII, 34, 35

**Massagetai** (in 529 BC, a subtribe of the Scythians near the Aral Sea, attacked by Cyrus the Great, who lost his life in this battle. The queen of the Massagetai, Tomyris, could be the historical

character the Persians would see as the source of Amazon legends) 3, 12

**Maussolo** (377–353 BC king/satrap of Karia, with queen Artemisia II; his “Mausoleum” tomb was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) 30, 32, 33, 80, 81

**Mazday/Mazaios** (c. 390–328, general and satrap; in 331, appointed by Alexander to govern Babylonia – the first Persian to receive such high office in his reign. This is by far the most important precedent for Alexander’s ‘state policy’ of integration. Therefore, the career of Mazday, and the reasons why Alexander made him satrap of Babylon, merit a much denser biography than the scope of this book allows. The essential data are:

Mazday appears for the first time, both on excavated coins and the written record, in the year 361 BC. He is appointed satrap of Kilikia, to succeed the recently murdered Datames. Kilikia and its capital Tarsos now are the principal watchtower and staging area for Persia’s military control over Asia Minor. The aftershocks of the so-called Great Satraps’ Revolt (366 to 360) make the Tarsos garrison, and the stronghold of Cyinda with its treasury deposit, the key instruments for the Persian king’s policy. It means that Artaxerxes II, by appointing such a young officer to this post –Mazday has not yet reached 30 years of age– is highlighting his absolute confidence in his man. He must know him personally. This, in



turn, makes it a near total certainty that Mazday proceeds from the officer corps of the Royal Guards, the 'Immortals'; and that, until his appointment in Tarsos, he would be a commonplace presence in palace for the king and his family (including the then young princess Sisygambis). Good connections at court allow Mazday to survive his first disaster, after ten years in office at Tarsos. In 351 BC Artaxerxes III *Ochus*, on the throne since 358, orders Mazday to put down a rebellion. Together with Belesys, satrap of Syria, they are to subdue the uprising of a city-state in Fenicia, Sidon, allied to mutinous Egyptians and 'Yaunas'. But Mazday and Belesys suffer a humiliating defeat at the hands of a (basically, Greek) mercenary army commanded by general Mentor. In the end, *Ochus* himself has to lead the Persian forces to crush the rebels. In 345 he takes Sidon and has all its 40,000 inhabitants killed out of hand.

Belesys is disgraced – but not Mazday. Instead, he receives orders to take over the satrapy of Syria, and to direct personally the military occupation of Fenicia. To finance these operations, he issues his own coinage from the mint in Sidon (342–337). His status and his territorial control over Fenicia, Syria and nearby zones in Mesopotamia increase by the year. In the political chaos after the death of Artaxerxes III, until Darius III ascends the throne, Mazday becomes a force to be reckoned with. In 336, he is proclaimed

‘Friend of the King’ and honoured with the promise of a future marriage to Darius’ baby daughter, Barsine. The queen-mother Sisygambis will have had much to say in this election of the groom for her first grandchild.

Mazday is at the elbow of his king in the decisive battle of Gaugamela against Alexander. He directs the Persian army’s right wing with great success –all sources agree–, though even that is insufficient to avoid Alexander’s victory. While Darius flees to the northeast, Mazday, with a few units that have survived the Persian disaster, falls back on Babylon. (He has personal ties to the city; a wife, probably, as his elder son carries the typical Babylonian name of Ardu-Bel.) He knows that he cannot defend Babylon with these scant forces. In exchange for Alexander’s promise that the city will not be sacked, he opts for surrender.

Alexander makes a triumphal and festive entry into Babylon – and at the same time, he names Mazday as the governor of this metropolis that is to be the capital of his dominions. This is the most impacting example of a Persian leader accepting a key appointment in Alexander’s reign. Mazday remains in office, to everybody’s satisfaction, until his death in 328; his sons will be promoted in 324 to the highest ranks in Alexander’s army.

The surprising choice of general Mazday to begin – and with his example, promote– Alexander’s policy of combining victors and vanquished to

build up his new empire, can only be based on first-rate inside information. Just a few weeks have passed since the battle of Gaugamela, where Mazday was a most effective enemy leader. Alexander must have relied on the counsel of a top-level Persian advisor who could weigh and explain the merits of each candidate. It is the conviction of the author of this book that Alexander's advisor was the Persian queen-mother Sisygambis, who had known Mazday for decades. By this time, Sisygambis had been travelling with Alexander for some two years already, since November 333 in Issos) VII, 42–43

**Meander** river (northern boundary of Karia, present-day W-Turkey) 77

**Meda** (c. 358, second wife of Philip, with whom she had no children <Family Tree: XI>) 89

**Medates** (331 BC, Persian noble, leader of the Uxians who opposed the Makedonian advance on Perspolis; married to a niece of Sisygambis, and pardoned by Alexander at the queen-mother's plea) VII, 40, 41

**Meissner, Bruno** (professor of History at Leipzig university, expert on Mesopotamian queens; published *Alexander und Gilgames* in 1884) 73

**Memfis** (c. 331 BC, religious capital of Egypt; today, a suburb of Cairo) VII

**Memnon** of Herakleia (a historian who probably lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD; part of his *History of Herakleia*, covering the period 364–70 BC and thus including the story of queen Amastris, was

abridged and preserved by Photius) 47, 105, 106, 107, 157, 158, 159

**Memnon of Rhodes** (c. 375–333 , Greek mercenary general for Darius III; married to Barsine, daughter of his Rhodian sister) VII, 18, 20, 81, 82

**Mentor** (c. 380–340 BC, Greek mercenary general and elder brother of Memnon, to whom he left his wife Barsine and their daughter) 18, 81

**Meroé** (capital of Kush/Nubia in 593 BC–350 AD, the so-called ‘Meroitic period’ when Egyptian influence gave way to the home-bred culture of an independent state) 3, 61

**Metz Epitome** (late Latin manuscript of unknown origin, found at the city of Metz, containing incomplete chronicles about Alexander’s deeds; with the add of his purported Testament *Liber de Morte*, probably from other sources) 35, 156, 160

**Mieza** in Makedon (today: Naoussa; Peukestas’ birthplace; c. 342 BC, site of Aristoteles’ school for Alexander and his companions from Philip’s court) 89

**Minos** (king of *Minoan* sea realm 2000–1500 BC on Crete) 77

**Miletos** (rich city in Ionia captured by Alexander in 334 BC) VII, 78, 152

**Mirzapizaka** (woman employee in Susa who c. 480 BC travels on official business to Persepolis) 72

**Mithra(s)** (ancient Persian god turned into ‘Saviour’ by Zoroaster) 55, 56, 113

**Molossia** (landlocked kingdom in N-W Greece; its

capital, Dodona, was the birthplace of princess Polyxena/Myrtale/Olympias, future mother of Alexander and Kleopatra. Molossia's royal family claims descent from Achilles. At least since the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, Dodona was the site of a shrine of "Gaia" the Great Goddess, with its famous oracle in a sacred oak grove. Taken over by Zeus c. 1400 BC, the oracle was still consulted by the pagan Roman emperor Julian in 362 AD on his forthcoming campaign against the Persians) VI, 3, 29, 30, 85, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 95, 98

**Murashu** (bankers/tax farmers in Nippur; their archive found there at excavations yielded records dating to 455–403 BC; 18 texts in the Murashu Archive mention queen mother Parysatis) 73

**Mush** (site of Anahita temple) 55

**Mylasa** (former, landlocked capital of Karia; under king Maussolo, the harbor city Halikarnassos became the new capital) 78, 80, 83

**Myrtale** ("of the myrtle garland", thus honouring Afrodite/Great Goddess; name chosen by Polyxena/Olympias at her religious initiation) 29, 88

**N:**

**Nag Hammadi** (A collection of 13 codices with 52 not always complete texts was discovered in 1945 in Upper Egypt at Nag Hammadi, near the temple at Dendera dedicated to the goddess

Hathor. However, their translation was not completed and published until the 1970ies. In parallel, the 'Papyrus Berolinensis' that had been acquired in Cairo by the German scholar Carl Reinhardt in 1896, saw its publication delayed until 1955. This 'Berlin Gnostic Codex', or PB 8502, often identified as the 'Akhmim Codex', coincides with 2 texts found at Nag Hammadi. It was an decisive discovery that this codex held the most complete surviving copy of the Gospel of Mary of Magdala, or Magdalene. Two other fragments of the same Gospel, from separate Greek editions, were later unearthed in Northern Egypt at excavations in Oxyrhynchus. This fact explains early Christian traditions saying that the disdain of Peter and other apostles towards Mary Magdalene as a woman, was compounded by jealousy because she was an 'outsider': Jezus had come to know her on a journey in Egypt where she had been initiated in religious knowledge, something unheard of in the Jewish society of their days)

**Nearchos of Kreta** (c. 370–300; Alexander's admiral; married in Susa to Barsine's likenamed daughter) VIII, 2, 27, 90, 140, 141, 154, 155, 156, 159

**Neoptolemos** (traditional king name in Molossia; son of Kleopatra, reigned in 317/12 and 302–297 BC <Family Tree: XI>) 87, 91

**Neti** (mythological Sumerian chief gatekeeper of the Underworld) 52

**Nikaia** (322 BC intended bride for Perdikkas; Antipater's daughter) 93, 94

**Nikesipolis** of Ferai (Thessalian wife to Philip of Makedon and mother of princess Thessalonike; but Nikesipolis died three weeks after the childbirth, and Thessalonike was brought up by Olympias) 89

**Nikomedia** (birthplace of Arrian, ver *ibid.*) 155

**Nile** river (see also: Canal dug to Red Sea on Darius I's orders) VII, 25, 127, 130, 131, 132, 137

***Nin-me-shar-ra*** ("Lady of all the Divine Powers"; hymn to goddess Inanna, written c. 2250 BC by her priestess Enheduanna, see *id.*) 51

**Ninshubur** (handmaid of the goddess Inanna) 51, 52

**Nippur** (ancient city on Euphrates, 160 kms S-E from Baghdad; site of *Murashu* excavation, see *id.*) 51, 73

**Nizami** (1141–1209 AD Persian author of the *Sikandar-Nama*; see: Abu Muhammad bin Yusuf) 142–146

**O:**

**Ochus** (Old Persian: *Vahush* = the Good One; birth name of Artaxerxes III, see Persia's King List: IX; and Family Tree: X > 6, 24, 26, 30, 32, 38, 56, 72, 81, 89, 90, 104, 113, 150, 160

**Olympias** (373–316 BC, princess and later regent of Molossia; queen of Makedon as wife of Philip; mother of Alexander <but not queen-mother of the Empire, a role he reserved to Sisygambis of

Persia! > ; see: her biography by prof. E. Carney, listed in Reference Books, p. 162. At birth she was called Polyxena but later, at her religious initiation, she chose a new name herself: Myrtale. In the end, she was called 'Olympias' as a reminder of Philip's victory at the Olympic Games of 356 BC, on the day Alexander was born. <Family Tree: XI>) VI, 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 17, 25, 28–30, 33, 36, 37, 41, 85–100, 134, 147, 160, 162

**Onesikritos of Astypalaia** (380–305 BC; Diogenes' pupil; helmsman on Alexander's flag ship; published an Alexander biography in 319 BC) 139, 140, 141, 154, 155

**Opis** (near present-day Baghdad; in 324, site of a mutiny of Alexander's Makedonian soldiers; see Alexander's speech at Opis as quoted by Arrian, [pages 150–153](#)) VIII, 136, 150

**Orexartes/Jaxartes** (name used by Plutarch for the river, now known as the Syr Darya, that runs to the Aral Sea) 141

**Orontes** (son of *King's Eye* Artasyras; in 401 BC married to Rodogune, eldest daughter of Artaxerxes II, and appointed satrap of Armenia; in 365 led the 'Great Satrap's Revolt', but was later pardoned by Artaxerxes III. In 331 BC at Gaugamela his likenamed grandson commanded Armenian troops and later befriended Peukestas, sic Diodoros; his satrapy included the Tapurians, who under Peukestas reinforced Alexander's army) 109



**Orontobates** (in 335 BC, satrap of Karia, Persian son-in-law of Pixodaro; fled the country when Alexander reinstated queen Ada I) 6, 31, 82

**Orosius** (375–420 AD Christian theologian, author of *Historiarum adversum Paganos* based on texts of Caesar, Livius, Justin, Tacitus, Suetonius and bishop Eusebios)

**Osiris** (ancient Egyptian Underworld god; king, brother, husband of the goddess Isis) 60, 63

**Ostanes** (uncle of Sisygambis and father of her husband Arsames) 70

**Oxathres** (brother of Artaxerxes II) 70

**Oxidelcis** ( in the pseudo-Kallisthenes: the misspelled name of Oxyatres, see id)

**Oxus** (river that runs to the Aral Sea; today, called Amu Darya, it marks part of the frontier between Turkmenistan and Uzbekstan; in ancient times, called Oxus, and considered the northern boundary of the Achaemenid empire) 54, 152

**Oxyatres** (Old Persian: \*Hu-xšaθra- “of good reign”, sic Tavernier; c. 375–320? BC; younger son of Sisygambis, thus brother of Darius III whom he bodily protects at the battle of Issos; after Darius’ death, comes to Alexander’s court and is elevated to the rank of *doryforos/somatofylax*; his General Staff post could be chief of the Persian intelligence service, for he possibly had been Darius’ *King’s Eye*; at the Susa marriages, at the request of Alexander, he gave his daughter Amastris in marriage to general Krateros) <Family Tree: X> VIII, 103, 105, 106,

**P:**

**Pamfyllia** (satrapy in Asia Minor) VII

**Pandosia** (name of a region in Molossia and also of one in southern Italy, where Alexander the Molossian was ambushed and killed) 92

**Pancaspe** (Atticised version of the Thessalian name Kampaspe <see id>: c. 334 BC, a hetaira and Alexander's first bedmate. Some sources confuse her with the also Thessalian call-girl Kallixeina. Pliny the Elder writes: "Alexander engaged Apelles to paint the most beloved of all his concubines, called Pancaspe, naked...") 160

**Parian Marble** (chronology inscribed on marble at the Greek island of Paros, in the Aegean; it gives the dates for the murders of both Alexander's sons, saying that Alexander IV and Herakles "another son, from Artabazos' daughter" died in 310–309, "when Hieromemnon was archon of Athens")

**Pariskas** (c. 401 BC; eunuch servant of Cyrus the Younger) 109

**Parmenion** (c. 385–330 BC; Makedonian general, right-hand man of king Philip II, and initially Alexander's ranking general; in 333 he sent the captive Barsine to Alexander. In 330, killed on Alexander's orders as a consequence of the treasonous behavior of his son Filotas; for it was feared that the execution of his son would provoke Parmenion to rebel) VII, 18, 19, 28, 90,

**Parmys** (granddaughter of Cyrus the Great, wife of Darius I) 67

**Parsa** (Persia's ceremonial capital, see: Persepolis) VII, IX, 1, 2, 15, 20, 38, 40, 55, 56, 67, 68, 72, 73, 74, 113, 138, 163

**Parthenon** (temple for goddess Athena built by Perikles on the akropolis of Athens)

**Parthia** (region in NE-Persia; from 247 BC to 228 AD the Parthians first defeated Alexander's successors, the Seleukids, setting up their independent kingdom; later, they counterbalanced Rome's hegemony) 11, 127, 128, 152, 157

**Parysatis/Purushatu** <1> (c.470–400 BC; half-sister and wife of Darius II *the Bastard*; grandmother of Sisygambis. Parysatis, daughter of Andia, a Babylonian concubine, had four children with Darius II: Arshú (= Artaxerxes II); Amastris; and two later sons, Ostanes and Cyrus the Younger, whom she preferred, aided and abetted in his war on his brother Artaxerxes II. As part of that conflict, she poisoned Stateira, wife of Artaxerxes and mother of Sisygambis. Her own name in Old Persian, *Purushatu*, derived from the root \*Pa(u)ru-šyāti-š, “with much prosperity” sic Tavernier; she appears in 18 tablet texts of the *Murashu* archive at Nippur <Family Tree: X>) 38, 59, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73

**Parysatis** <2> (the youngest daughter of Artaxerxes *Ochus*, married to Alexander at Susa

in 324 BC, so that his heirs could reunite the legitimacy of all branches of the Persian Royal House. She remained childless, but even so Roxane and/or Perdikkas had her murdered, too. Professor Carney posits that it is Parysatis, and not Drypetis, whom Roxane killed at the same time as Barsine/Stateira in 323 BC) <Family Tree: X>) 2, 3, 24, 26, 160

**Pasargadai** (“Stronghold of the Persians”: site of Cyrus’ victory over the Medes; coronation ceremonial site with tomb of Cyrus the Great; 43 kms NE from Persepolis) VIII, 56, 59, 65

**Pausanias** <1> “the Traveller”, (115–180 AD Greco-Roman writer and geographer, author of the *Description of Greece*) 59, 78, 157, 160

**Pausanias** <2> (Makedonian bodyguard who killed Philip II in 336 BC allegedly as revenge for humiliations inflicted by Attalos and Philip; but probably also as a paid assassin hired by Persian gold) 91

**Peithon** (d. 312 BC at the battle of Gaza; Makedonian general, *somatofylax*, made satrap of Media by Perdikkas) 120

**Pelignas** (in 334 BC, a slave cook, according to **Athenaios, XIV. 659 d** Olympias wrote, urging Alexander: “Buy Pelignas the cook from your mother. For he knows the manner in which all sacred rites of your ancestors are carried out, both the Argadistic and the Bacchic, and all the sacrifices that Olympias offers he knows. Do not neglect this, therefore, but buy him with all

speed.”)

**Pella** (capital of Makedon, birthplace of Alexander)  
VI, 2, 7, 18, 30, 89, 90, 92, 93, 95, 160

**Penthesileia** (legendary Amazon queen from Efesos who took part in the Trojan War; loved but slain by Achilles) 2, 10, 46, 142

**Perdikkas** <1> (old king name in Makedon <Family Tree: X>) 86, 87, 88, 89

**Perdikkas** <2> (357–320 BC Makedonian general, *somatofylax*, married in Susa in 324 to a daughter of the satrap of Media; after Alexander's death, ally of Roxane and would-be inheritor of the empire as Regent of Arridaios and Alexander IV; soon in conflict with all the other marshals, and killed by his own staff during a campaign against Ptolemy in Egypt) 2, 12, 16, 17, 23, 24, 25, 27, 83, 91, 93, 94, 104, 119, 120, 124, 129, 140, 159

**Pergamon** (N-W Ionian city, where Barsine the concubine withdrew in 327 with Alexander's newborn son Herakles. In 240–210 BC, Pergamon was the capital of the independent kingdom of the Attalids) 128

**Perikles** (495–429 BC; Athenian statesman, had the new Parthenon built)

**Perinthos** (Greek harbor on the Marmara Sea, together with Byzantion controls the Bosphorus; in 340 BC, helped by Pixodaro of Karia and Persian gold, Perinthos tried –in vain – to rebel against Philip) 81, 150

**Persefone** (ancient Greek goddess, queen of Hades

in Underworld; daughter of Demeter) 53, 54

**Persepolis/Parsa** (Persia's ceremonial capital. In 330 BC, the emptied palaces were burnt down on Alexander's orders; archeological research by Finn in 2008 proved it was a planned and controlled action, saving temples and non-governmental buildings. An unintended consequence of these fires was the preservation of clay archive tablets, cooked and hardened. About a hundred Treasury Archive texts from Persepolis, recording royal payments in silver in 492–458 BC were made available between 1948 and 1965. Other texts, published in 1970, were written in Aramaic. This coincided with the biggest windfall: the discovery of over 8,000 texts, dated between 509 and 493 BC and found on tablets in the **Persepolis Fortification** Archive. They deal with the royal administration of food commodities. About 7,000 are written in the Elamite language of Susa, with some incrustations of Old Persian. Another thousand were written in Aramaic, but there is also one in Greek, one in Frygian, and a few in Neo-Babylonian) VII, IX, 1, 2, 15, 20, 38, 40, 55, 56, 67, 68, 72, 73, 74, 113, 138, 163

**Peukestas** (355–300? BC, a close friend of Alexander who saved his life by covering him with the 'Achilles shield' in Mallia, India, and was then made *somatofylax* in 325 BC. Soon after, Alexander appointed him satrap of Persia; there, he became immensely popular by following the

same ‘integrated rule’ policy that Alexander planned for the whole empire. Peukestas was confirmed as satrap at the Triparadeisos settlement of 321. Afterwards, in the Successor Wars against Antigonos *One-Eye*, he rivalised with Eumenes for the supreme command of the ‘Royal Army’. In 316 BC, as Diodoros mentions in XIX, 22.2, Peukestas seemed to be on the verge of winning the favor of the soldiery, thanks to a splendid banquet he offered them at Persepolis – see Wouter Henkelman 2011: *Parnaka’s Feast*–; but then, at the battle of Gabiene, Antigonos won and in consequence Eumenes was arrested, and Peukestas dismissed from his satrapy, in spite of loud protest by the Persian aristocracy) VIII

**Philae** (island in the Nile cataracts near Assuan in southern Egypt, with the main temple of the goddess Isis) 60, 61, 62, 63

**Philip** (b. 382, king of Makedon 359–336 BC; father of Alexander; see: Filippus <Family Tree: XI>) VI, VII, 6, 9, 16, 18, 22, 29, 30, 81, 82, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 97, 113, 119, 134, 135, 145, 154, 156

**Philippeion** (votive monument to Philip’s core family –his father, his mother, himself, his wife Olympias and his son Alexander– built c. 336 BC at the sanctuary of Olympia and decorated by Athenian sculptor Leochares, to the order of Philip) 90

**Photius** (820–897 AD; patriarch of Constantinople; in 845 he led an embassy to the Abassid

Caliphate, where he found a library that preserved texts of ancient Greek authors no longer extant in the West. Coming home, Photius published a “Myriobiblion” containing digests of 280 classical authors. In this way, he preserved fragments, and even complete books, of historians like Ktesias, Memnon of Herakleia, Diodoros and Arrian) 119, 158

**Pisidia** (region above modern-day Antalya, Turkey) 94

**Pixodaro** (youngest son of Hekatomnos, sent by him to study in Athens; married to Afneis, a princess from Kilikia. Obeying Persia, in 341 he launched a palace coup against his sister, the widow queen Ada I, whom he expelled from Halikarnassos but could not subdue as she established herself at the fortress of Alinda. Even so, Susa named him satrap/king of Karia 340–335 BC. On Persian orders, he aided the Perinthos rebellion against Philip II; but around 337 he tried to sign a treaty with Philip, and offered his daughter Ada II for a bride to the Makedonian crown prince. The negotiations failed and Ada II was married to Orontobates, the next Persian satrap of Karia, defeated by Alexander in 334 BC) 6, 31, 81, 82, 90

**Pliny the Elder** (23–79 AD; Roman general, writer and scientist; died while trying to study the Vesuvius volcano eruption on site. In his *Natural History*, book 35, ch. 36, Pliny writes on the painter Apelles: “Alexander honorem ei



clarissimo perhibuit exemplo, namque cum dilectam sibi e pallacis suis praecipue, nomine Pancaspen, nudam pingi..." Alexander conferred upon him a very signal mark of the high estimation in which he held him; for, in his admiration of her extraordinary beauty, he engaged Apelles to paint the most beloved of all his concubines, called Pancaspe, naked...) 7, 61, 157

**Plutarch of Chaironea** (45–120 AD; Greek priest, moralist and biographer of many leaders of Antiquity, including Alexander) 1, 7, 9, 11, 14, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 30, 32, 47, 69, 79. 92, 98, 109, 118, 140, 141, 155, 159–161, 163

**Polyainos** (born c. 100 AD in Bithynia; Makedonian writer on military science who c. 163 AD published a book on *Strategies* dedicated to emperor Marcus Aurelius) 16, 89, 157, 159

**Polybios** (203–118 BC, Romanised Greek author; himself a professional historian, he harshly condemns "amateurs", especially Kallisthenes and Fylarchos. Tutor and later advisor of Scipio Africanus. The extant part of the *Histories* of Polybios covers the period 220–146 BC) 137, 157

**Polykleitos** (c. 370–320 BC, author of an eyewitness account of Alexander's campaigns; cited by Plutarch) 141

**Polyperchon** (380–310 BC; Makedonian general, later Regent, who made Olympias the guardian of little "co-King" Alexander IV, but later sold them out to Kassander. After his deal with Kassander,

he also engineered the murder of Barsine and Herakles whom he had brought to Greece as pawns for his negotiations) 25, 95, 99

**Polyxena** (birth name of Olympias, see *ibid.*)

**Pompei** (near Naples, Roman town covered by the ashes of the Vesuvian eruption of August 24<sup>th</sup>, 79 AD; site where the “Alexander Mosaic”, the reproduction of a then famous painting, was discovered)

**Pompeius Magnus** (106–48 BC; Roman general, Caesar’s rival) 128

**Poros** (reigned 340–317 BC in the Pauravaa kingdom in NW-India; defeated but reinstated in 326 BC by Alexander; confirmed at Triparadeisos) VIII, 10

**Psammetikos I & II** (664–590 BC, Egyptian pharaohs who employed Karian mercenaries) 78

**‘pseudo-Kallisthenes’** (nickname for an anonymous scribe c. 220 AD in Alexandria, author/source of the *Alexander Romance*) 41, 141, 144, 145, 147, 148, 149, 157, 160, 163

**Ptolemaios/Ptolemy I Soter** (367– 283 BC; childhood companion of Alexander, Makedonian general and *somatofylax*. Pharaoh of Egypt after Alexander’s death; by the end of his life, author of a <no longer extant> autobiographic history of Alexander’s career. To shore up his legitimacy, he favored the gossip story that, in reality, he was a bastard son of Philip II, sic Curtius 9.8.22) 2, 13, 15, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 90, 94, 95, 96, 106, 108, 120, 123, 124, 125, 127, 135, 141,

154, 155, 156, 159

**Ptolemy II “Filadelfos”** (309–246 BC, successor of Ptolemy I; rebuilt the Isis temples on Philae) 106, 137

**Pydna** (port city in Makedon where Olympias took refuge and was besieged by Kassander in 317 BC. She surrendered –with Thessalonike, Roxane and Alexander IV, who had accompanied her– on terms, but Kassander broke the agreement. He forced Thessalonike to marry him, and had Olympias, Roxane and Alexander IV killed) 95

**Pythia** (title/name of the priestess at the Delphi oracle of Apollo; she falls in trance to utter his prophecies, which are then ‘interpreted’ by the priests. When Alexander visited the oracle in 335 BC, he used a phrase of the Pythia out of context, to present himself to the Greeks as an invincible leader for the campaign against Persia) 2, 14, 160

**Q:**

**qanat irrigation system** (underground canals, dug to convey water from – usually, hillside– natural sources to agricultural flatlands. The origins of this irrigation system, found in several <semi->desert areas of the Middle East and North Africa, may be very ancient, possibly dating back to Sumerian and Assyrian canal constructions. However, experts think that it was elaborated into a complex technique by Iranian peoples in the first millennium BC and then taken over by

neighboring peoples. Polybios credits the Achaemenid empire with a general policy of promoting this irrigation system. 'Qanat' irrigation remained in use for many centuries, sometimes with tunnels reaching out for tens of kilometers. In a few places the system still provides water to large communities) 137

**Quintus Curtius** (see: Curtius) 15, 21, 35, 36, 40, 140, 141, 155, 156, 160, 161

**R:**

**Religious freedom** (as decreed by Alexander: the Rev. G.F. Mc Clear, warden of Canterbury, writes in his New Testament History: "As subjects of the Persian kings, the Jews were eminent for their loyalty. While Egypt, Cyprus, Fenicia, and other dependencies of the Persian crown, were frequently in rebellion, the Jews remained in steadfast allegiance to the High King. However, as Alexander came near, having sieged and razed Tyre, Jaddua the High Priest of the Jews had a dream telling him to welcome the conqueror. Alexander was as shrewd as Cyrus, and must have been fully aware of the loyalty of the Jews and of the reasons for their loyalty. There were enough Jews not only in Babylonia but also at the heart of the Persian empire, Media, to merit a special mention; they might be useful to him. He offered to bestow on the Jews any privilege they might select. They requested that the free enjoyment of their lives and liberties might be secured to them, as also to their brethren in

Media and Babylonia; and Alexander agreed.”)  
56

**Renault, Mary** (1905–1983, author of highly recommendable novels set in the Ancient World, plus an insightful biography of Alexander, besides her novelised trilogy about him; see [Reference works, page 163](#)) 10, 11, 163

**Rhodes** (Greek island; in 352 BC, Rhodians attacked, but lost against, Artemisia II of Karia. On the other hand the mother and the two uncles/husbands of Barsine, were Rhodians) 17, 81

**Rhyntaces** (Persian bird) 71

**Rodogune** (name of several Persian princesses; e.g., a daughter of Darius the Great, and a daughter of Xerxes and Amastris; also, the first daughter <420–398 BC> of Artaxerxes II, married to Orontes son of the *King's Eye* Artasyras. <Family Tree: IX>) 37, 109, 110

**Roman reverence** for Alexander's *magic*: The historian Appianus says in his *Mithridatic Wars* that when Pompeius Magnus conquered the East, he felt he needed Alexander's magic. Pompeius had the ancient booty of conquered nations searched until he found – or said he had found– Alexander's 260-year-old cloak, which he then donned on state occasions. Later, Caesar's and Augustus' respectful visits to the Tomb in Alexandria were followed by that of a destructive fan: Caligula had Alexander's armour taken to Rome “to wear it for luck”. And after visits by

emperors Trajan, Hadrian and Septimus Severus, the latter's son Caracalla again bordered on the ridiculous by casting himself as Alexander, and his bodyguard as a Makedonian phalanx. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, some emperors of oriental descent tried to identify themselves with Alexander to the point of always carrying images of him on their person. This obsession spread far and wide: the patriarch of Constantinople, the later Saint John *Chrysostomos*, publicly complained that many people in his day bound coins with Alexander portraits to their hand and feet to ward off all evil) 128, 129

**Roxane** <1> (name of several Persian queens; e.g., a wife of Cambyses II)

**Roxane** <2> (in 440 BC, daughter of Hydarnes, a descendant of the Vidarna who helped Darius I to seize the throne, and thus sister of Stateira, the mother of Sisygambis. Ktesias FGrH 688 f15.55: "Roxane was beautiful to behold and extremely expert in handling the bow and the javelin". He also picks up the gossip that her brother fell in love with her and disdained his wife Amastris, daughter of Darius II and Parysatis, who then had the whole family executed, with exception of Stateira, saved by the pleas of Artaxerxes II. Roxane, says Ktesias, was "flayed alive" on Parysatis' order) 37, 38

**Roxane** <3> (= Rosh-anak, "Little Star"; Baktrian beauty, born c. 342, murdered in 310 BC by Kassander. Wife of Alexander and mother of his

son and shortlived successor Alexander IV) VIII, 3, 8, 16, 21–25, 95, 119, 123, 124, 144, 148, 160  
**Royal Road** (from Susa to Sardès, 3200 kms; in general, road system improved by Darius I) 20, 138

**S:**

**Sacae/Saka** (= *Sakâ haumavarg* “Haoma-drinking Sacae”, in Old Persian; one of the tribes living in the northern steppe regions. Near the Aral Sea, a subtribe called the Massagetai was attacked by Cyrus the Great at the price of his own death in 529 BC. Alexander defeated a cavalry force of the Saka at the battle of the Jaxartes river in 329 BC, and then established a – tacit?– agreement of non-agression with them; in exchange, their leader Karthasis offered him a daughter for a bride. The etymological root of the name Saka is “scutha” (thus also: Scythians) which means arrow-shooter; these horse-mounted archers dominate Central Asia and most of Mongolia, being the precursors of Ghengis Khan and his empire. Saka, Scythians, and Sogdians are distant relatives of the early nomad tribes of the Medes and Persians) VIII, 23, 152

**Salamis bay** (site of decisive naval battle of Athens against Xerxes in Sept. 480 BC; Artemisia I of Karia distinguished herself in this battle) 79

**Samarkand** (city in present-day Uzbekstan; in 328/7 BC the site, then called Marakanda, was Alexander’s winter HQ, where in a drunken brawl

he killed Kleitos “the Black”) VIII

**Samothrace** (island with a Makedonian-sponsored shrine, where Philip first met Myrtale/Olympias, at a *Mysteries* festival in 357 BC. This isolated sanctuary retained, much longer than other places in Greece, reminiscences of cults related to the primitive worship of the Great –or Mother– Goddess; which would explain Myrtale/Olympias’ preference for this shrine. These ancient religious roots were still notable in 294 BC, when a wife of Lysimachos, Arsinoe, personally paid for the building of a large public structure as an offering to the *Great Gods*) 29, 33, 88

**Sammur-Amat** (usually known as ‘the legendary Semiramis’, Sammur-Amat is a historical queen of Assyria, for her royal stele has been found at the capital of Assur, confirming her status of a sovereign. This Babylonian princess had become queen-consort in 820 BC; in 811–806 BC she was the Regent for, and later co-sovereign with, her son Adad Niran III. She had important waterworks built to ensure Babylon’s prosperity. An inscription found at Nimrud –near present-day Mosul in Iraq– confirms that Sammur Amat retained considerable political and religious influence in the times of her son’s reign. In 787 BC she still had the power to impose the cult of the Babylonian god Nebo in the whole of Assyria. Over a thousand years later, Arrian still remembered: “It had been a custom in Asia, ever since the time of Semiramis, even for women to



rule men!") 4, 31, 65, 66, 75

**Sarcophagus** (burial coffin; in Bodrum/Halikarnassos, a sarcophagus discovered in 1982 contained the skeleton and the jewels of a high-ranking Hekatomnid woman, probably Ada II. Another famous case is that of the so-called *Alexander Sarcophagus* sculpted c. 320 BC probably for the tomb of Abdalonymos, king of Sidon. Excavated in 1887 at the royal necropolis of Sidon, and now at the Istanbul Archeological Museum, neat the Topkapi palaces. It is considered a Hellenistic masterpiece, including statue depictions of Alexander and Hefaistion. Its image of Hefaistion may be the only extant one sculpted by artists who had seen him in person)

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**Sardès** (also written Sardis; capital of Croesus' Lydia; after being taken by Cyrus the Great, stronghold and treasury of the Persian satrapy. In the late 8<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century, Sardès had a sole Mother Goddess; in 500 BC, at the start of the Ionian uprising, Herodotos says, "Sardis burned and in it, the sanctuary of Kubabe or Cybele, the Great Goddess". Kubabe, also prominent in Karchemish, is an epithet of the Mother Goddess. So when Artaxerxes II in the 4<sup>th</sup> century sets up an Anahita statue in Sardès, he is in fact reestablishing its old religion. Sardès remains the empire's principal capital and garrison in Asia Minor under Alexander and under Perdikkas. When Kleopatra negotiates her possible marriage

to Perdikkas, one of the guarantees she obtains from him is her appointment as “commander of the Sardès garrison”: that is, military protection under her own command. Though the marriage fails to materialise, as from 321 she comes to reside in the city, where she is finally murdered in 308 on Antigonos’ orders) VII, 56, 80, 82, 83, 93, 94, 95, 96, 106, 120, 125, 138, 155

**Sargon** (r. 2334–2279 BC, the king of Akkad who conquered Sumer, so establishing the first multi-ethnic empire in Mesopotamia; to promote the integration of his new dominions, he made his daughter Enheduanna the high priestess of the goddess Inanna in the city of Ur) 51

**Sassanid Empire** (in 224 AD a Zoroastrian dynasty takes over power in the territory of Parthia, until its power is destroyed by muslim Arabs in 651. The founding father of the Sassanids is Ardasher I, a descendant of Anahita priests at Istakhr near Persepolis; he sees himself as a successor to the Achaemenids. In Göbl’s study of Sassanid investiture scenes, the goddess Anahita is seen on coins depicting the crowning of Ardashir I (226–240 AD), Shapur I, Hormozd I, Bahram II, Narse, Hormozd II, Shapur II and III. Narse (292–303 AD) is shown on a relief at Naqsh-e-Rostam, standing before Anahita who invests him with the sovereignty. On a Taq-e-Bustan rock carving, Anahita presides the investiture of king Peroz (459–484 AD) or Khosrow II (591–628 AD). The last Sassanid ruler, Yazhdegird II (632–651 AD),

was proclaimed king by the nobles of Pars in the Anahita temple at Istakhr, near Persepolis) 56, 144

**Satrap**s (governors of parts of the Persian empire, appointed by and answerable to the High King, many of them being relatives of his. This administrative system was instituted by Darius the Great, who divided the empire into 20 satrapies; over time, the number and territorial extension of the satrapies would vary. The satraps often became hereditary viceroys, and sometimes leaders of rebellions, as in the Great Satrap's Revolt of 366–360 BC against Artaxerxes II. Alexander named and dismissed his satraps as a personal decision. At his return from India in 325, after an absence of some six years, he found that several satraps and other local leaders had abused the powers he had given them. As a consequence, he ordered a series of exemplary punishments. Thus the satraps Abulites and Oxatres, his son, were executed for corruption in Susa and Paritâkanu; similar penalties were imposed on the satraps Astaspes and Orxines, and the rebellious nobles Ordanes, Zariaspes and Baryaxes. Alexander also ordered 600 of his Makedonians punished for cases of rape and pillaging; this included the execution of generals Kleander, Sitalkes and Herakoon) VIII, 12, 30, 80, 83, 114, 138, 148, 150, 151

**Scythians** (peoples living beyond the Black Sea. The etymological root of their name is “scutha”,

meaning arrow-shooter; these horse-mounted bowmen dominate all over Central Asia and Mongolia, being the precursors of Ghengis Khan and his empire. Scythians, Saka and Sogdians are distant relatives of the early nomad tribes of the Medes and Persians. Alexander meets and defeats a Scythian tribe, called “Sakâ” by the Persians, in 329 BC. Trying to establish a stable relationship, their leader Karthasis offers him a daughter in marriage; this episode may have led Kallisthenes to create the legend of the Amazon queen Thalestris) VIII, 2, 3, 11, 12, 141, 156, 160

**Seleukos** (358–280 BC; Makedonian commander of elite units like the Silver Shields under Alexander, who in 324 in Susa married him to Apame, daughter of the defeated Baktrian leader Spitamenes. As from 312, warlord and later king in Babylon. Soon, he dominated the whole Persian heartland. In 301, together with Lysimachos, Ptolemy and Kassander, they succeeded in finally routing Antigonos *One-Eye* at the battle of Ipsos. Thus Seleukos, adding Syria and part of Asia Minor to his kingdom, came to dominate the most extensive ‘inheritance’ from Alexander’s empire. Seleukos used to make much propaganda out of a supposed portent in Babylon in Alexander’s final days: he retrieved his diadem from the reeds and swam back with it bound around his head –as if he were a king already–, to Alexander’s approval. As king, Seleukos founded twin cities on the river Euphrates at Zeugma,

calling them Seleukia and Apamea. Also named after his queen were the cities of Apamea on the Orontes in Syria, and Apamea-Silhu in Babylon. By that time, Apame was claimed to be the daughter of Alexander and Roxane, who was said to be a daughter of Darius III; so that the Seleukid dynasty could claim throne rights both via the Achaemenids and via Alexander) 2, 27, 47, 94, 95, 103, 106, 107, 108, 124, 125, 128, 140, 155, 159

**Semiramis** (=Sammur-Amat, see id., queen of Assyria c. 820–780 BC) 4, 31, 65, 66 75

**Senusset III** (pharaoh c. 1850 BC, first ruler of Egypt who ordered the digging of a canal through the Wadi Tumilat/‘Bitter Lakes’ depression, natural outlet to the Red Sea from the eastern arm of the Nile delta) 137

**Septimus Severus** (145–211 AD; Roman emperor, visits the Alexander Tomb in 199 AD, and orders it sealed “for its protection”; his descendants Caracalla and Alexander Severus publicly revere Alexander the Great) 147

**Shah-Nama** (Firdausi’s epic work on the history of Persia’s kings, published c. 1010 AD) 143, 145

**Sharaf-Nama** (title of the first and best known part of the epic *Sikandar-Nama*, published in 1203 by Nizami, see id)

**Sidon** (city in Fenicia; 40,000 inhabitants perished in its rebellion of 351–345 BC against Artaxerxes III Ochus) VII

**Sikandar/Iskandar** (Oriental version of

Alexander's name) 10, 146

**Sikandar-Nama e Bara** (epic poem on Alexander, written around 1200 AD, elaborating a centuries old oral tradition, but also including factual historical material. Its author, Nizami, published the text in 1203 AD in Tabriz, dedicated to its sultan) 11, 12, 45, 139, 142–145, 159

**Sisygambis** (403–323 BC, Persian queen-mother. The first part of the Greek transliteration of her name derives, sic Tavernier, from the Old Persian \*Ciça- or Tsjissa- = “splendid lineage”; the second part cannot yet be traced. Sisygambis is the youngest daughter of Artaxerxes II and Stateira. Nearly all sources report her as the wife of her cousin Arsames, son of the king's brother Ostanes. Arsames will become one of the many victims among the Aechamenid princes, murdered by Arterxes III *Ochus* to pave his way to the throne in 358 BC. Arsames and Sisygambis have two sons: Artashata –the future Darius III– and Oxyatres. From 344, Sisygambis and her sons live in Armenia, birthplace of her mother the queen Stateira, where Artashata has been made satrap. In 336, Sisygambis returns to Susa having become, to her own surprise, queen-mother at nearly 70 years of age. However, in 333 BC, she is left behind on the battlefield of Issos when Darius III flees before Alexander, who then takes her under his protection and treats her as if she were his own mother. Sisygambis accompanies him on the campaign trail for over two years,

until he reestablishes her at her palace in Susa in December, 331. As he does not bring over his mother Olympias to reside in a capital of his new dominions, Alexander ‘de facto’ maintains Sisygambis in her role as queen-mother of the empire. To Persian eyes, without doubt she legitimised Alexander on the throne by calling him publicly “my son”. She continued to be the highly influential queen-mother of the empire – viz. the *Susa Weddings*– until her very last day. In June 323, on being informed of Alexander’s premature death, Sisygambis withdrew into profound sorrow, refused to eat, and died of grief in five days. <Family Tree: X>) VII, 3, 23, 26, 27, 36–49, 56, 75, 83, 86, 87, 103, 104, 107, 108, 110, 114, 148, 161

**Siwah** (oasis with a famous Ammon oracle in Egypt, near the Lybian border, that Alexander visited in 331) VII, 14

**Sogdanios** (second son of Xerxes I. In 424 BC, he murdered his brother Xerxes II to take the throne, but a few months later he was killed in turn by his half-brother Darius *the Bastard*; see: Persia’s King List, p. IX, and Family Tree, p. X)

**Sogdia** (N-E region of the Persian empire, covering present-day Uzbekistan and parts of Afghanistan; this is where Alexander met Roxane, whose family had fled neighboring Bactria) VII, VIII, IX, 21, 23

**Somatofylax** (=“bodyguard”) honorary title for Alexander’s seven top generals Hefaistion,

Lysimachos, Leonnatos, Artistonous, Peithon, Perdikkas and Ptolemy; in 325 BC, Peukestas was added as 8th. after saving Alexander's life in Mallia, India) 93, 125, 154

**Sparta** (rival city to Athens; byword for a warlike, militarised society) 80

**Spathaka** (Old Persian: "the one who sees" = The King's Eye, chief of the imperial secret service) 113–115

**Spitama Zarathustra** (= Zoroaster, ver ibidem) 57

**Spitamenes** (370–328 BC; Darius' satrap in Sogdia who in 329 BC turned the usurper Bessos over to Ptolemy, but –resisting harsh occupation policies?– soon reopened the fight against Alexander, with surprising initial success. His probable Zoroastrian ascent may have given him wide support among the locals against the 'heretic enemy'. But after a series of bloody defeats inflicted on him by Alexander's new tactics, Spitamenes was killed and turned over to the Makedonians by his own people, as a price for the peace. His daughter Apame, however, was taken under Alexander's personal protection; in all probability he sent her to Susa to be brought up by Sisygambis. At the Susa Weddings, he married her to Seleukos, so the whole dynasty of the Seleukid empire descends from her) 2, 103

**spy service** of the Persian High Kings (explained by Aristotle and other authors) 108–115

**Stateira** (several queens carry this Old Persian name meaning "Gift of the Stars": <1> 440–400



BC, wife of Artaxerxes II and mother of Sisygambis. King Darius II *the Bastard*, to shore up his dubious legitimacy, arranged a double marriage of his eldest son Arshú and his daughter Amastris, to the children of the Achaemenid prince Hydarnes. The bride of Arshú was the princess Stateira, born in Armenia. Later, her relatives were executed by Darius on a –probably false– accusation of incest against her sister Roxana. Only Stateira was spared, because of Arshú's pleas to his parents) 37, 38, 55, 59, 69, 70, 71

**Stateira** <2> (royal wife and <half->sister of Darius III. Captured on the battlefield of Issos, she died in 331 BC of natural causes – some sources say, in childbirth, though no father is mentioned in any source) 2, 8, 160

**Stateira** <3> (=Barsine/Stateira; c. 340–323 BC; granddaughter of Sisygambis, as first daughter of Darius III; at the Susa Weddings in 324, married to Alexander, and thus ranking queen of the empire; murdered by Roxane as soon as Alexander had died <Family Tree: X>) 2, 3, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 45, 47, 89, 101, 105, 107, 123, 132, 159

**Strabo of Amasya** (63 BC - 23 AD Greek geographer and writer) 46, 59, 62, 78, 106, 157, 159

**Sumatra** (Westernmost of the greater islands of Indonesia; its N-W tip, Aceh, was governed c. 1600 AD by a Muslim dynasty reclaiming descent

from Alexander) 146

**Sumer(ian)** (first and foremost among the ancient cultures of Mesopotamia, having invented writing around 3200 BC. With his conquest of Sumer c. 2350 Sargon, king of Akkad, established the first multi-ethnic empire in Mesopotamia) 51, 53, 54, 55

**Susa** (=“city of lilies”, ancient capital of Elam, and of Persia. Darius the Great transformed Susa into a principal Achaemenid royal seat c. 520 BC. Place of residence of queen-mother Sisygambis; at her court in Susa the princesses Barsine, Drypetis and Amastris, were educated in preparation of ‘**the Susa weddings**’ in 324. Here, not only Alexander, Hefaistion and Krateros married these three granddaughters of Sisygambis, but also 80-plus of their Companions wedded other princesses and noble daughters of the Persian empire. Moreover, Alexander had the scribes draw up a register of all soldiers in the Makedonian army living with Persian women. As a result, the Royal Treasury paid 10,000 dowries) VII, VIII, IX, 2, 8, 12, 15, 18. 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 38, 40, 41, 43, 46, 47, 48, 55, 56, 68, 72, 81, 101, 103, 104, 107, 108, 112, 113, 138, 151, 152, 159

**Syr Darya** (Central Asian river –in ancient times called Jaxartes– running towards the Aral Sea) 141

**Syria** (satrapy in the region of the ancient Assyrian empire; c. 410, the Persian queen-mother

Parysatis was famous for her vast estates in Syria, allowing her to muster an army for her favorite son Cyrus the Younger. Around 340 BC, Syria and the Levant were added to the powerbase of the satrap Mazaios/Mazday, making him a key player in the subsequent ascension of Darius III to the throne) VII, 3, 34, 39, 42, 65, 68, 69, 128, 131, 138, 149, 151

**Syriac** (soothsayer friend and protectress of Alexander; in 327, she asked him to stay away from his tent and so frustrated an assassination attempt on his life) 3, 34, 161

**T:**

**Talent** (Greek monetary unit, equiv. to 6000 drachmai, or 26,2 kg of silver which was supposed to be the maximum weight a person could carry on a day-long march; see: Drachma) 136

**Tanaïs** river (today: river Don, considered a border between Europe and Asia) 152

**Taxila** (Indian city, centre of learning, captured by Alexander) 139

**Telesippa** (Greek free woman, probably a *hetaira*, who c. 324 decides to leave Mesopotamia, thereby provoking one of Alexander's soldiers to apply falsely for invalidity leave in order to go with her; in his judgment of the case, Alexander emphasizes that Telesippa is free to decide for herself) 2, 5, 8, 160, 161

**Testament** (c. 309 BC a falsified testament of

Alexander, later known as the *Liber de Morte*, was circulated; it had been faked on Ptolemy's orders) 123–125, 145, 147, 156

**Testament** of Ardasher (Sassanid text on governance, including the use of spies) 114

**Thais** (c. 330; Athenian concubine of Ptolemy; said to have proposed the burning of Persepolis in revenge for Xerxes' sack of Athens) 2, 15, 160

**Thalestris** (legendary Amazon queen and supposed lover of Alexander) 2, 11, 160

**Thara** (place in North Persia where Bessos murdered Darius III) VII, 19, 43

**Theagenes** (Theban military leader at the battle of Chaironea against Philip) 9

**Thebes** (city in Greece, sometime rival of Makedon, and often allied to Persia. Razed in 336 BC after Alexander's siege/sack of Thebes, but later allowed to be rebuilt) VI, VII, 8, 9, 10, 88, 103, 141, 161

**Theopompos** (c.377–300 BC; Greek historian from Chios, pupil of Isokrates; in 351 BC he won a Rhetorics Prize awarded by queen Artemisia II of Karia. He wrote a history of Philip's reign, which –though praising Demosthenes– became a main source for Trogus. After Alexander's death he sought refuge in Alexandria under Ptolemy) 31, 80, 81

**Theorodoch** (Greek title given to leaders of a special office to welcome envoys sent on religious errands; Kleopatra was the only woman of such rank) 85, 92

**Theseus** (legendary king of Athens who married the Amazon queen Hippolyta, thereby provoking an Amazon invasion of Attika) 79

**Thessalonike** (half-sister of Alexander; therefore also the name of a major city in Makedon/Greece founded by Kassander, and named after his queen. In 298–295 BC the widowed Thessalonike was the regent of Makedon for Kassander's son, who killed her in the end) 2, 16, 17, 89, 93, 95, 124, 160

**Thrakia/Thrace** (region in N-Greece bordering on Makedon, conquered by Philip; Lysimachos became king here after Alexander's death) 9, 89, 106, 150

**Thucydides** (460–400 BC, from Athens, first scientific historian) 77

**Tigris** river (area of Great Goddess cult) 59, 148

**Timokleia** (336 BC sister of Theban general Theagenes; during the sack of Thebes, she was set free by Alexander) 2, 8–9, 161

**Tiribazos** (400–380 BC satrap for Artaxerxes II in Armenia and Ionia; brokered the “Peace of the King” with the Greeks in 387 BC, then invaded Cyprus; later disgraced, and killed in a palace coup) 80

**Tisikrates** (c. 300 BC, famous sculptor, disciple of Lysippos. He made a statue of Peukestas' feat saving Alexander's life in Mallia) VIII

**Tomb** (of Alexander's embalmed body, in Alexandria: see under “Alexander Tomb”; it was known locally as the *Soma* <body> and as the

*Sema* <sign>; the mummies of the Ptolomaic dynasty were buried around his tomb) 129

**Tomyris** (in 529 BC, queen of the Scythian Massagetai tribe who refused to submit to Cyrus the Great. When he attacked her, she defeated him, causing his death on the battlefield, an episode that may have inspired Amazon-like legends in the East) 2, 12

**Trajan** (53–117 AD; Roman emperor, visited the Alexander Tomb and also added a new construction to the Isis temples on Philae) 62, 137

**Triparadeisos** (in Syria; in 320 BC, place of the provisional settlement of Alexander's legacy, signed by his generals under Antipater's authority) 94

**Trogus Pompeius** (c. 10 BC, a Romanised Gaul called Trogus Pompeius wrote a *Histories* in which the two volumes about Alexander were based mostly on a second-hand version of Kleitarchos; these volumes were later abridged, rather ineptly, by Justin) 155, 156, 158

**Troy** (ancient city/kingdom on the Hellespont/Dardanelles, site of Homeric Wars; Alexander went to visit it in 334 BC and took Achilles' shield as trophy) 87, 88

**Tyre** (leading Fenician city, foremost naval power and centre of a commercial empire active in the whole Mediterranean during the first millennium BC, having founded Carthago; in 332 BC, Tyre was besieged and taken by Alexander) VII, 150

**U:**

**Ur** (oldest Sumerian city in Mesopotamia, near the mouth of the Euphrates river; site where around 3200 BC writing was invented for administrative purposes, but soon applied to literature. About 2300, Sargon of Akkad conquered Sumeria; to promote the integration of his new dominions, he made his daughter Enheduanna high priestess at Nanna's temple in Ur, and at Anu's temple in Uruk) 51

**Uruk/Erech** (on the Euphrates river, one of the three principal cities of ancient Sumeria; its patron deity is the goddess Inanna. In times of Sargon's empire, the city also had a famous temple for the sun god Anu; Sargon sent his daughter Enheduanna to be the high priestess there) 52

**Uxians** (Persian tribes in the region of Persepolis; its warriors controlled the mountain passes on roads from Susa to Persepolis, and in December 331 opposed Alexander; see under "Medates", the Uxian leader who asked for clemency through the queen-mother Sisygambis. Alexander not only granted his pardon, but also gave the Uxians – both in the mountain passes and in the valley zones– a tax rebate. It is possible that the agricultural lands of the Uxians were part of the personal domains of Sisygambis in the Persepolis area; in other words, that in reality Alexander was exempting the queen-mother from tribute) VII, 40, 41, 152

## V:

**Vahush** (= *Ochus*, “The Good One”; birth name of Artaxerxes III, see id.)

**Valerius, Julius** (Roman consul in 338 AD; translated the text of the ‘pseudo-Kallisthenes’ into Latin) 149, 157

**Valerius Maximus** (c. 25 AD, Roman author who in his quotes preserved parts of the texts of Trogus) 158, 161

**Venus** (planet, identified in Sumerian myths and astronomy with the goddess Inanna, Lady of Heavens, in her form as the planet Ninsianna) 53, 61

## W:

**Wiesehöfer, Josef** (b. 1951; professor of Ancient History at Kiel university in Germany, expert on Mesopotamia, see [Reference Works](#)) 72, 163

**Wilberforce Clarke** (English translator in 1880 of Nizami Ganjavi) 143

## X:

**Xenofon** (430–355 BC; Athenian noble, sometime disciple of Socrates, later general and writer; took part, as a mercenary officer, in the march of Cyrus the Younger against his brother king Artaxerxes II, that ended in defeat on the battlefield of Kunaxa. Author, among other works, of the *Anabasis* and the *Cyropaedia*) 8, 33, 39, 44, 45, 65, 69, 110, 111, 163

**Xerxes** (b. 520 BC, High King, son of Darius the



Great and Atossa; reigned 486–465 with queen Amastris, chosen by Atossa. To highlight Xerxes' vices, Herodotos says he tried to seduce both the wife and a daughter – Artaynte– of his brother Masistes, who then rebelled in Baktria, but was killed. To entice Artaynte, Xerxes engineered a (fake?) marriage with his son Darius II in Sardès, while queen Amastris was far away in Susa, says Herodotos. But Dr Maria Brosius contends that his story about a robe woven by Amastris and flaunted by Artaynte, is a misrepresentation. Such robes are attested to as royal gifts of the highest order, demanding careful use as they visualise loyalty to the High King. Brosius considers implausible Herodotos' story of Xerxes going out of the palace in order to seduce Artaynte <as a daughter in law, she could be convoked to palace>, and her asking for this robe to wear it publicly, so causing Amastris' revenge –killing Artaynte's mother by torture—that provoked Masistes' failed revolt. In reality, this might be a mix-up of other facts: a revolt by Masistes, who displays his disloyalty by allowing his daughter to wear an imperial robe publicly against all custom; followed by the defeat of the rebels, and harsh punishment <Persia's King List: IX; and Family Tree: X) 15, 32, 38, 66, 67, 68, 72, 78, 79, 80, 110, 112, 163

**Y:**

**Yasht** (hymn by Zoroaster) 57-58

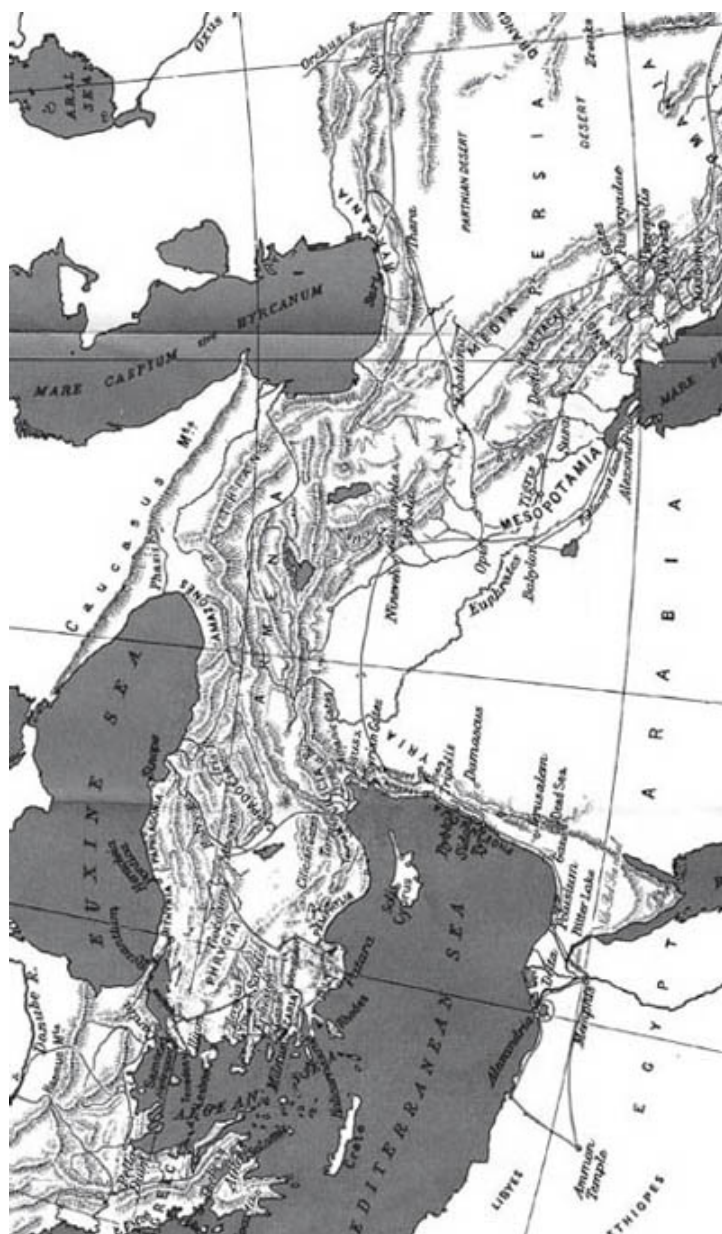
## **Z:**

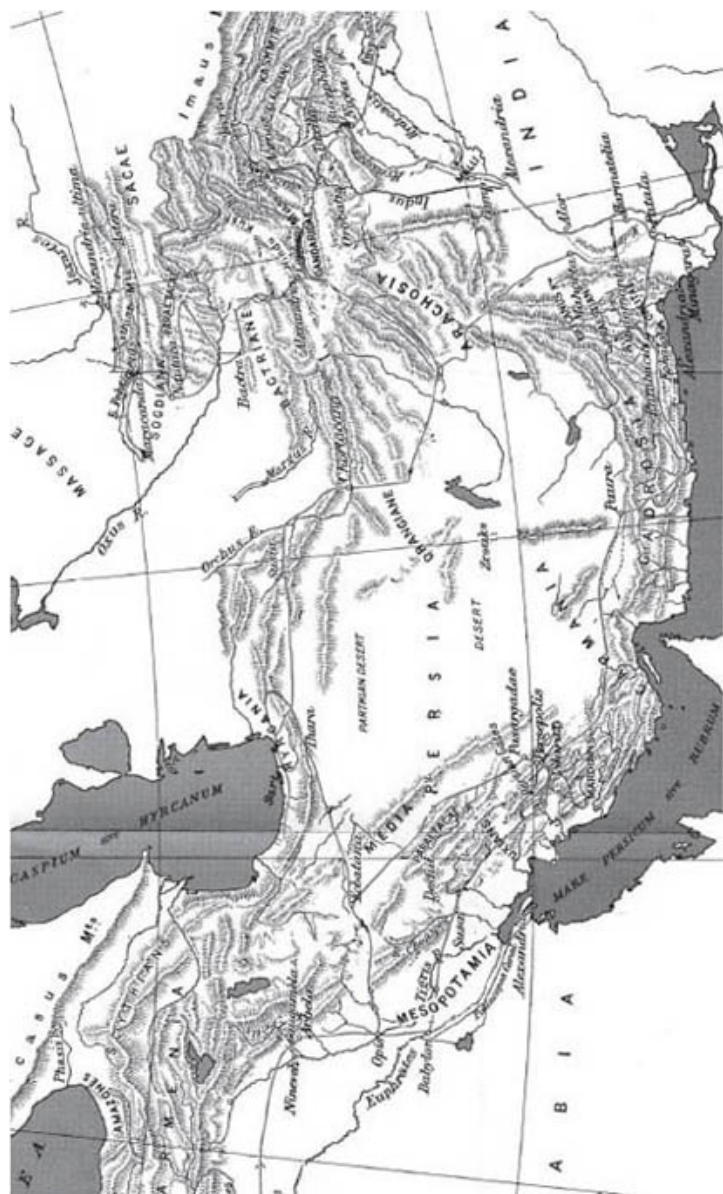
**Zenobia, Julia Aurelia** (queen of Palmyra 267-272 AD; claimed descent from Cleopatra VII; briefly occupied Alexandria from 269 until 272 when Rome defeated her) 3, 132

**Zeus** (Greek supreme male deity; in Karia, assimilated as **Zeus Karios /Zeus Labraunda**) 13, 14, 59, 78

**Zoroaster/Zarathustra** (prophet, theological writer, and religious reformer. Although solid biographical data are lacking, some experts consider he was born in Baktria in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. His theology centers on the supreme 'God of Wisdom' Ahura Mazda, but includes the cult of other deities, like the goddess Anahita. His faith is 'canonised' in the oral version of the *Avesta*, or Zoroastrian bible, around 650 BC. Tradition holds that the founding father of the Sassanid empire, Ardasher I, c. 230 AD ordered the first written text of this sacred book to be composed) 27, 55, 57, 66

**Zranka** (now Seistan, an Iranian region bordering Afghanistan. Ancient stronghold of Anahita worship) 55





1 See my note on [page 135](#) about transcribing Greek and other names

2 In the chaos after Alexander's death in 323 BC, Cynnane is the first who decides to force a military solution to the succession problem. She musters an army (so her fame as Philip's martial daughter still is solid enough to attract mercenary soldiers). She outmanoevers the regent Antipater when he tries to block her plans. Crossing the Hellespont into Ionia, she launches an appeal to Alexander's elite regiments that are campaigning there under Perdikkas. These are the regiments that have proclaimed Alexander's halfwit half-brother as joint king, besides Roxane's baby son whom Perdikkas also has under his control. The troops are very much aware that Arridaios will never be fit to run an empire. Cynnane offers them the solution: have her daughter Adeia marry Arridaios. That way, Philip's offspring will again rule Makedon under the banner of Cynnane's well proven military prowess.

Her proposal is so attractive for the Makedonian soldiers, who are quite fed up with Perdikkas' ambitions, that he has Cynnane done away with. But this murder provokes such an outcry in the army that Perdikkas is forced to compromise. Adeia indeed marries Arridaios and becomes queen of Makedon. True, for the moment she has to submit, together with her husband, to Perdikkas and Antipater; but their control is slipping fast. When Perdikkas is murdered by his own staff officers in Egypt, Adeia comes close to usurping the high command over the army; and when Antipater finally dies of old age, she becomes the 'de facto' ruler of Makedon. (But in the end Adeia clashes head-on with Alexander's mother Olympias, loses her foothold and disappears from the scene.)

3 See [page 151](#)

4 See her "secret letter to Darius" quoted by the pseudo-Kallisthenes; [page 149](#)